

TAO TE (tea)CHING:
LEARNING ALONG THE 'WAY'

by

Heather Dawn Coey
B.Sc., University of Victoria, 1989

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Communications and Social Foundations in Education

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard



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ABSTRACT

Through my masters program, I engaged in reflective journaling regarding my growth pathway(s), through the philosophy of Taoism, and writing about my life, my personal experiences and teaching, and reflecting upon them and their meaning(s). I scrutinized how I teach to see what 'works' for me; what enables me to be happy, healthy and peaceful in teaching and learning, and in particular, engaging with students. I also elicited students' perspectives, through group dialogue sessions, of what 'works' for them; what enables them to be happy, healthy and at peace while learning in a classroom setting, growing personally and intellectually. This investigation was situated in the Flexible Studies program at Reynold's Secondary school, because it is there that influencing factors converged to a point where I felt happiest, healthiest and most peaceful teaching.

The study was phenomenologically oriented--a narrative of lived experience as myself and my students struggled together to understand the curriculum as an extension of ourselves, which shapes our being. It is about the transition from making learning happen to letting learning happen, in the space between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived. There could be many spaces which might allow such a transition, from making to letting. It is important to find the right space for each individual, part of that being an internal finding. 'Letting happen' does not preclude, however, setting up environments, and developing philosophies and ways of being which have the potential to let positive things happen.

T'ai Chi, a moving meditation of Taoist origin, was used as a metaphor for the transition and personal growth that occurred along the 'Way'. T'ai Chi uses external moves for internal benefits, starting with the feet, the bubbling springs. The hand movements follow the feet, hinged by the spine. If one focusses on the fancy movements of the hands and disregards where the feet are placed, the benefit will be lost.

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- My students, for all their insight and for learning with me, along the Way.
- My family, friends and colleagues for their unending support and belief in who I am.

Most especially, I acknowledge the love and support of my husband, David, whose patience helps make the Way a lot smoother.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis
to my Grandfather, Jack Shaw
1919 to 1992
For his love of learning.

PRESCRIPT

Hobbes: Why are you digging a hole?
Calvin: I'm looking for buried treasure.
Hobbes: What have you found?
Calvin: A few dirty rocks, a weird root and some disgusting grubs.
Hobbes: On your first try?
Calvin: There's Treasure Everywhere!

-Bill Waterson, (1996)

How nebulous and blurred!
Yet within it there are images.
How blurred and nebulous!
Yet within it there are objects.
How cavernous and dark!
Yet within it there is an essence.
Its essence is quite real;
Within it there are tokens.

-Tao Te Ching

MOVEMENT ONE

PUSH NEEDLE TO SE(A)E BOTTOM
Looking at the Process for Learning

海底針

"I believe that if we learn a deeper noticing of the world
around us, this will be the basis of effective concern."
(Bateson, 1994, p. 109)

Through my masters program, I've engaged in reflective journaling regarding my growth pathway(s), through the philosophy of Taoism, and writing about my life, my personal experiences and teaching, and reflecting upon them and their meaning(s). I have scrutinized how I teach to see what 'works' for me; what enables me to be happy, healthy and peaceful in teaching and learning, and in particular, engaging with students. I also elicited students' perspectives of what 'works' for them; what enables them to be happy, healthy and at peace while learning in a classroom setting, growing personally and intellectually. This investigation is situated in the Flexible Studies program at Reynold's Secondary school, because it is here that influencing factors have converged to a point where I feel happiest, healthiest and most peaceful teaching.

The text of this thesis is a reflection of the journey I have been on, and am still on. It is woven together with [indented] journal entries from the past two years, *chronologies* (excerpts from time past), transcript pieces from discussions with students, quotes from other writers, and my current voice, within a Taoist framework. Transcript pieces were written without clearly identifying the speakers, because participants moved together with moments of oneness within spaces¹ created between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived. In this way, the text, as well as the journey, becomes a shared experience from which to gain meaning.

In order to understand our own experiences of teaching we must truly stand under them in those places where the bluebirds never fly.
(Grumet, 1988, p. 74)

It was my intent to model lifelong learning to my students, the ongoing process of growth through personal reflection, while challenging oneself to learn and understand and

¹There is a somewhat nebulous yet very important location developed within this thesis. It has no tangible boundaries, but for linguistic requirements it will be referred to as an in-between 'space', between the curriculum as planned (the ministry intended outcomes) and the curriculum as lived (the multitude of experiences that my students and I bring to the 'classroom' together), a place for possibilities.

be a good person...to show them the 'Way'. In truth, it was more that they helped show me the 'Way', and so it is, that teaching and learning are one.

First I just want to ask you what you think my study is about.

The best ways to learn.

Well I think it's about how people learn best, like in an environment or with a particular teaching style or given what they're taught, and about people learning values as well; what they like to learn, if they like to learn and how they would go about doing it.

Have I told you what the title of it is yet?

No

It's called, "TAO TE (tea)CHING: Learning along the 'Way'." It's about teaching, learning, living in the space between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as live(d).

Wow. (laugh)

The background on how I ended up coming to this is, I was thinking that there were at least half a dozen things I could do my thesis on but no matter what direction I pointed myself, I ended up coming back to the same question and that was centered around what made teaching and learning most enjoyable. I thoroughly enjoy teaching but I wasn't enjoying teaching in the 'school system' very much the last two years. It was 'getting to me' and I was beginning to think of my alternatives. I would take on way too much of the responsibility for my students' learning rather than having them take primary responsibility for their own learning. I

can be available to help them as much as I can but their own learning is their responsibility. In some of my university classes we were encouraged to keep a journal and reflect on our teaching practices among other things and I kept on coming back to the same thing. No matter what tangent I took, like how Math could be taught as a more human subject, I kept coming back to how you can exist in 'that space' and the thing that I am most interested in, and everything you said is part of it, concerns looking at that space. You've got curriculum that is mandated through the government, so the curriculum already exists, and each of us already exists. Each of us has what we bring to this environment. Given that you have both of those things, how can you work in the middle to make it the best that you possibly can for each individual person? I've never been happier teaching in six years. Part of my inquiry is to find out why, how has the 'space' changed for me? My study is called a phenomenological study which means that it is the study of lived experience. I'm not going to do a survey followed by a statistical analysis of how the majority of people learn best. I am working with a much smaller group of people, trying to get some deeper insight into the lived experience of that space, alone, in order to perhaps gain meaning from the experiences. That's what I want to focus our discussion on today, more on that space.

How do you personally live in that space?

Throughout my masters program, I have been struggling to understand my life and how teaching fits with it. Anyone's choice in career becomes a part of one's life but I believe teaching has a special connection to life as a whole. It is a career with an entire focus on learning and growing and thus it becomes a model for lifelong learning and personal growth throughout life. Because my career choice is so embedded in the processes of lifelong learning and personal growth, I feel there is a stronger bond between

my life and my being a teacher rather than some other career choice. This thesis then, becomes as much a probing into the meaning(s) of life as it does a search for meaning in teaching and learning. Life and teaching are indeed hinged together, with independent freedom of movement, but connected.

Much of the observation for this thesis was situated in the Flexible Studies Program at Reynold's Secondary school where I taught for the first time this past year. The program follows the British Columbia curriculum in the areas of science, mathematics and humanities. The divergence from the 'traditional' system results from the way the rooms, time, units and assessment practices are organized for the approximately 200 students in the program; they are 'flexible'. Students are in 'Flex' for half of their school timetable. They consult a weekly calendar which outlines any demands (formal classes), drop-ins (structured help in a specific area), and testing blocks. When they are not required to be at any of the above, they organize their time and resources (teachers being a 'big one') in order to work on their math, science and humanities units in the Flex area. On any given day in Flex, you might see a Grade 8 student sitting beside the mathematics teacher going over a test previously written, to learn from her mistakes, and have a chance to rewrite; three Grade 9 students working on their science unit on energy; a pair of Grade 10 students videotaping their friends for a play they are producing in humanities; a Grade 11 class receiving a lesson on resume writing and two of the Flex teachers meeting to organize a field trip to Science World. Time is flexible to aid in organizing guest speakers, field trips, longer classes, shorter classes and hopefully, to better meet the needs of each individual student.

This thesis was developed based on reflective journaling by myself and dialogue sessions with students I teach in the Flex program. I approached three groupings of students who regularly sat and worked together in Flex; one made up of six Grade 11 girls, one of five Grade 11 boys and one of two Grade 10 boys. I told them what my inquiry was about and asked them if they would be willing to engage in informal discussion groups

where we would openly talk about topics around teaching and learning. They were very keen to take part and also kept their own journals to help stimulate thoughts for the dialogue sessions. I chose older participants because they had the greatest experience so far with school and I approached the groups that normally worked together because I wanted the dialogue sessions to be as natural as possible. Thus, my thesis became a narrative of my lived experience with my students as we struggled together to understand the curriculum as an extension of ourselves, which shapes our being, within a developing Taoist philosophy.

We gather other people's experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves. We are interested in the particular experiences of this child, this adolescent, or this adult since they allow us to become 'in-formed', shaped or enriched by this experience so as to be able to render the full significance of its meaning. (Van Manen, 1990, p.62)

It is in this context that I framed my inquiry. My question was, **What meaning(s) can be found through the live(d) experience of teaching/ learning, living reflectively in the space between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived?**

My journaling as well as the dialogue sessions held with my students have focussed in on this inquiry. In our dialogue sessions I asked the same questions of my students that I was asking of myself. In this way I used a hermeneutic² interview style whereby my students became collaborators of the research project. Together we looked to uncover meaning(s) through our lived experience of the 'space' we were in within the school system. This produced a mutual process of synergistic reflection which was very exciting. Through our discussions, reflection was pushed deeper within our lived experience enabling insight into this inquiry.

I chose a phenomenological³ orientation for this inquiry because no set of quantitative data nor experimental or artificially created instrument or situation could come

²Hermeneutics: The art and craft of looking for meaning.

³Phenomenology: A descriptive method of inquiry based on lived experience.

close to getting at what I was really interested in, human beings in all their non-conforming splendor, and what a particular experience--teaching/learning/being in the school system--was like for them.

The whole substance of what I am interested in lies intensely within my experience, my personal growth, what I go through, so that I might be able to bring my students to that point or lead them to the road that I am on. I am completely a part of it and cannot hope to remove myself from it so why not immerse myself in it. Perhaps that is another problem with teaching; we often try to keep ourselves separate from the world we 'work' in as teachers. We can't, therefore, perhaps we should let ourselves become part of the teaching, as an extension of ourselves, an interpersonal basis for human experience, teaching as life.

With the tangible data acquired through a phenomenological study one might really be able to gain something valuable for helping public education to be a positive experience for students and teachers, by transforming the individual (transforming one's principle bearing in one's lifeworld), altering how one perceives one's surroundings and situation and how one chooses to BE there.

...the more important question is not: Can we do something with phenomenology? Rather, we should wonder: Can phenomenology, if we concern ourselves deeply with it, do something with us?
(van Manen's paraphrase of Heidegger, 1990, p.45)

This thesis is a presentation of a process. One does not 'do' phenomenology. Rather, if one engages in phenomenology, through the process of deeply involving oneself in a lived experience, then change can occur through the process because of the engagement of all the senses in observation of all aspects of the experience. This brings to mind the moving meditation form of T'ai Chi. One does not 'do' T'ai Chi either. One engages in the process of learning it. It is not a static 'something' to do. Rather, it is a dynamic series of movements which are repeated but are revisited anew with each return--a cycling

forwards. In the T'ai Chi process internal benefits may be gained through the external movements.

The metaphor of T'ai Chi⁴ appeared naturally as I came to think of my students and myself doing a T'ai Chi set together, using the external moves for internal benefits, starting with the feet, the bubbling springs. The hand movements follow the feet, hinged by the spine. If one focuses on the fancy movements of the hands and disregards the feet the benefit will be lost. There is so much more than meets the eye with each move and no move is ever mastered. There is much room for continual growth. The moves are dance-like in quality, being individual but flowing together without disjointedness. Inherent within the moves is a Taoist philosophy embodying aspects of personal responsibility, reflection, calmness and selflessness.

- By observing how one's own body and energy operate while performing T'ai Chi movement, one may discover experientially the law inherent in individual being.
 - The first principle of T'ai Chi movement is that undivided oneness is the root of all movement.
 - The T'ai Chi is the integration of Yin and Yang polarities.
 - In the human body, T'ai Chi movement brings physical, emotional, mental and spiritual energies into alignment once again as undivided oneness. When a person achieves the integration of his own internal polarities through the practice of T'ai Chi movement, this in turn will cause the response of harmony and unification of all the apparent opposites which appear externally and internally in his life.
 - Sudden movement causes energy to stagnate, while gentle rhythmic movement brings about its flow.
- (Hua-Ching Ni, 1979)

A very important aspect of this thesis is embodied within Taoist philosophy--the transition from making learning happen to letting learning happen, moving from 'causing to be' by controlling and shaping, to 'allowing to be' by releasing and freeing.

Taoist T'ai Chi involves bringing both body and mind to higher levels of functioning, described as an alchemical process. While most of us associate alchemy with turning non-precious metals into gold, Taoist T'ai Chi concerns itself with bringing mind and body together in the crucible of Taoist internal alchemy where transformation is

⁴T'ai Chi is a moving meditation of Taoist origin.

towards the benefits of mental and physical health and longevity rather than the more transient benefit of the accumulation of material wealth (Panter and Davis, 1992). The transformation comes from within.

The cycling forward nature of T'ai Chi is true to the way life unfolds. Each return to a movement opens up another aspect of the movement yet unobserved. This thesis follows a parallel form. It takes the form of a story, which moves and flows, and stops and starts, goes backwards and goes forwards. Because its form is parallel to life, story is an appropriate way to render descriptions of experience.

Wherever a story comes from, whether it is a familiar myth or a private memory, the re-telling exemplifies the making of a connection from one pattern to another: a potential translation in which narrative becomes parable and the once upon a time comes to stand for some renascent truth. (Bateson, 1994, p.11).

The T'ai Chi movements with their italicized names, are a metaphor for the unfolding of this story. The movements create a living image of the process underwent and still continuing. First, *Pushing Needle to Se(a) Bottom*, the foot is placed one half step forward at forty-five degrees, the arms are parted palms down as if spreading the sea and the right hand is pushed through, open palm, fingers pushing towards the ground...a grounding, as well as an opening up for view. Then to look up, in *Step up to Seven Stars*, one stands with fists closed, arms crossed at the wrists located at the forehead in a fixed and stable position--orienting oneself for learning to come. After the navigation points have been set the course can be followed. At first a tiger was battled with, *Strike Ears with Fist*, in trying to make learning happen. After recognizing that brute force was not working, *Fair Lady Worked Shuttles* by moving into four corners (of a room--a lived space) and reaching out for a view of what was there through a weaving of lived space, body, time and relation to others.

After carefully reading and re-reading the transcripts of the dialogue sessions with my students as well as my own journal writing and theirs, an expression of our lived experience, teaching/ learning/being in the school system, was revealed through a shifting of movements against the existential dance at (the four corners): temporality (lived time), *Creeping Low Like a Snake* providing insight into the living and imposed environment, with primary concern for flexibility and choice; corporeality (lived body), *Step Up to Grasp Bird's Tail* represented through connection to life and personal style as well as finding enjoyment in learning; spatiality (lived space), *Golden Cock Stands on One Leg* showing the balance between our past, present and future; and sociality (lived relationship to others), *Carry Tiger to the Mountain* demonstrating the importance of interpersonal connections (van Manen, 1990).

In *Turning Around to Sweep Lotus* one performs a sweeping motion from side to side, gathering in all information and taking time to hear, as one is lead to attempt *Spreading Wings Like White Stork* and open oneself up to letting learning happen.

It is my hope that others will read my story, my students' stories woven within it, and make their own connections to it, stimulating them to reflect on their own experiences, thus contributing to the practice we call teaching.

The act of simultaneously recounting and re-creating one's cumulative experiences should provide critical insight into lived lives. Likewise, in reading about others, we may learn something about ourselves and come to value our own struggle for voice. (Britzman, 1991,p. 53)

Pinar helps me to clarify that observing the lived experience in the classroom can give much insight into the practice of teaching and learning, by suggesting that writing and reading texts of educational experience can reveal visions for curriculum within the daily experience of teachers and students (1975). Grumet echoes Pinar's sentiment in regard to the lived experience of teaching.

So it is the shadow of the experience of teaching that we pursue, here, hoping that as we catch a glimpse of its distortions and of the ground on which it falls, mingling the human figure with roots, rocks, curbs, and stairwells, we shall address the relation between what appears and what is hidden... (Grumet, 1988, p. 61)

This thesis is a story with many voices, moving together, as each one pulls on the other and draws it into view so that the juxtaposition as well as the connections may provide space for insight. The journey has no beginning and no end, it is itself, in between. Along the way our experiences become the chronologies of our lives, there for us to reflect back on. Each experience in the present immediately joins the chronologies of the past which together influence the shaping of the future.

Beginning the reflective process, I find myself asking, 'Who am I ? ...' and think back to the experiences of my life, the other(s) and the context(s) that have taken part in my shaping.

Who am I ?... We are founded in the other, the signifying system of language, a founding which makes us unconscious and opaque to ourselves. (Lacan, in Usher and Edwards, 1994, p.83)

I have woven important chronologies of my life, told in the third person and printed in italics, throughout the text of this thesis. They are in essence, the *chorus* of the T'ai Chi set, *Move Hands Like Clouds*. They embody my learning along the way, within a learning along the way, this thesis, an act of learning in progress. *Move Hands Like Clouds* is a middle move in the T'ai Chi set. The movement consists of shifting weight from the left to the right as well as up and down. One reaches out to the left and then pulls the hand in front of the face, palm open, at the same time scooping in the opposite direction with the other hand underneath. Some things are brought clearly into view while others are hidden from sight at the same time. Out of all the moves, this one has the greatest amount of internal and hidden subtlety of movement, like finding faces and objects within the fluffy whiteness of nature's clouds and fitting yourself between them as they move across the sky, a chain of movements.

She is presently twenty-eight years old and in her fifth year of teaching, but then this has been mentioned before. When asked to look back at her life and pick out significant things that may have affected who she is, she laments that it has been a pretty uneventful life and relatively short at that. She feels she doesn't have much 'life experience'. This she considers is one of her primary flaws. Encouraged with statements that in twenty-eight years there must be some events which stick out in her mind she closes her eyes to think... She wanted it known that there were no particular reasons for why she chose these particular memories but only that these were the ones that came to mind. Back in grade one she recollects having a 'bad year'. It all started when the students in her class were given maple tree seeds (helicopters) and hers had a broken 'wing'. She found another on the floor without a broken wing--she wanted one that would work. It turned out it had been another student's who had lost theirs. The teacher (she forgets her name) said that whoever took it should give it back right away or something bad would happen to them--they could go to hell. Well Heather was much too scared to do anything so she hid it deep in her desk. That night she told her Dad who reassured her that everything would be O.K. in fact he recounted to her a similar incident with a sand dollar when he was a boy. That same year after finding out that a girl got to go home when she said that she felt sick, Heather decided to get sick to get to go home. This illness fabrication became chronic and a specialist was brought in to work with her. She couldn't remember much about any of that (except taking the man's gloves to him in a brown paper bag to school) but she never missed a day of school since unless she truly was incredibly ill. In fact, she recalls that she never once handed in an assignment late, even when she was sick. At the end of that year in grade one, she emptied her desk drawer into the garbage for year end clean-up. Into the garbage can fluttered yet another 'broken' helicopter wing.

This is my story...

MOVEMENT TWO

STEP UP TO SEVEN STARS
Orientation for Learning to Come

上步七星

"As one part moves, all parts move; if one part is still,
all parts are still. Pull and move, go and come,
the chi goes to the back and is gathered in the spine,
making the spirit firm and leisurely manifesting
calm without."

-W.S. Wu

This is a quiet story. It does not contain tragedy or extreme revelation, nor an account of near-death experience. It is however an account of a transformation, a very positive one, which even in its subtleness, is profound. You might imagine it being told under a large weeping willow tree by a clear and softly flowing stream which has the potential for gaining momentum and producing much movement.

The highest good is like water;
 Water is good at benefiting the myriad creatures
 but also struggles
 to occupy the place loathed by the masses.
 Therefore,
 It is near to the Way.
 -Tao Te Ching

In Kanji, the character for school includes the symbol for tree and the character for teacher includes symbols for legs and life. This produces a wonderful picture of a teacher sitting cross-legged under a tree; teaching as connected to life and teacher as one who has walked before, along the Way.

This is the story of Tao Te (tea)Ching, my search for integrity and the Way as a person who teaches. The words of this title, searched after the first draft of this thesis was already prepared and the title was already chosen, captured the essence of its contents in true Taoist fashion--when you are not looking for it, the Way will show itself. This reflects the path my teaching career has taken. By setting up the potential for positive things to occur, such as enrolling in a masters program, I have ended up exactly where I am most happy. To follow the Tao is to have goals, set everything up for them and then let them happen. Seen in retrospect, there is irony in this simplicity. Victor Mair, a translator of the Tao Te Ching, researched into the meanings of these three words (1990). The word, Tao means Way, as being deeply imbedded in elemental human experience (almost like instinct). Fascinatingly, an archaic pronunciation of Tao sounded quite like *drog* or *dorg* which can be linked to a Proto-Indo-European root *drogh* meaning to run along. This links very closely to the origin of the word curriculum, *currere*, meaning to run a course.

Sanskrit, *dhrajas* (course, motion) also relates to the English word for track, which remarkably connects to the etymologies for learn and teach. The word teach even means to show (the Way).

Te, pronounced *dugh* during the early Chow period, meant character, quality, personality, personhood and virtue. Proto-Indo-European, *dhugh* (to be fit, of use), and German, *taugen* (to be good fit, of use) coincides with the part of my journey concerned with finding a good fit between who I am and how I am as a person who teaches. Te also represents self-nature and self-realization, the closest English translation of Te being integrity.

Ching is a standard term for classic, however a general meaning for it is 'warp of fabric' and from this was derived the meaning 'passing through', 'experiencing' just as this thesis was a lived experience within a lived experience, a 'passing through'. As well, old Chinese *gwing* is close to Proto-Indo-European *gwhi* meaning thread and signifying stitching the leaves of a manuscript together, hence this thesis.

During five years of teaching in the Victoria school district the student/teacher relationship and its importance has become much more apparent to me. In the process of developing into my own teaching style, I have come to realize the curriculum as planned is not sacred. What I believe to be of greater importance is the engagement in teaching and learning simultaneously, as student(s) and teacher(s) learn and teach together for mutual growth, using the curriculum as a vehicle.

... it is impossible to be a teacher without also being a learner,
that in order to be a teacher it is first necessary to abandon the
position of the one who knows', recognizing both one's own lack
of knowledge, and of self-transparency and mastery and that one's
own learning is never, and never will be complete.
(Lacan in Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 80)

What is your definition of learning?

When you understand something that you didn't before.

An Epiphany, higher understanding.

It's like when there's something you don't know and you have to understand it. It's not just like someone tells you. If you don't understand it I don't really think you've learned anything.

'Cause sometimes you get this thing, and you're supposed to learn it, so you just sort of memorize it and it goes by and you say, "O.K, I don't have to know that anymore."

If you get really interested in something and it's not really hard for you to understand it's like, "Oh, I know this," and it's in your mind forever but if you're just doing stuff like in Chemistry and learning equations... once I've gone past that, it's like I say, "I've learned that, passed that, so I can forget it."

Some things you just learn and you just know, and some things you just don't.

I don't know, I guess with any subject, you can't just sit down and learn it and memorize it without understanding why you're doing something or how you do it.

Like you understand it so you can use it, so you don't look at it and go, "What the heck is that?" You can think with an equation, that goes there and this goes here and that will get me this answer. You can start to use it.

You learn things through experience so natural learning would be through experience. You learn it naturally, like say if you're baking something and you decide to just test things out. You learn by experience, "O.K this was good, I'll do that next time," or "I'll add something else to it."

I think trial and error is natural learning.

Do you learn better if it's natural learning?

Yah because it happens because you experienced it. You don't have to think about it, it just happens. You don't have to say, "O.K I'm going to sit down and read this book and learn this," you just read the book. Like a text book, it goes in one ear and out the other. "O.K., what did I just read?" but if you were reading something like a novel or something, you know it.

I think that teaching and learning are closely related but they can be done in a variety of situations and in a variety of different ways. You might learn something from your mistakes.

Well don't they say you learn as you teach? There's a saying related to that.

The etymologies of the words, learn and teach as touched on earlier are very interesting. The word 'learn' ultimately goes back to an Indo-European *leis* meaning 'track', and so it seems to carry the underlying notion of gaining experience by following a 'track'. Very closely related are terms in various Germanic languages for 'teach'. Dutch *leeren*, Swedish *lora*, and Danish *loere* all, also mean 'learn'. 'Teach' itself, goes back to the prehistoric Indo-European base *deik*, meaning 'to show'--to show the Way perhaps. I believe there is importance in recognizing that the words learn and teach have the same origins and very connected meanings.

Life is not made up of separate pieces. A composer creates pattern across time with ongoing themes and variations, different movements all integrated into the whole, while a visual artist combines and balances elements that may seem disparate. (Bateson, 1994, p. 108)

We often try to divide our lives into separate pieces. Education is frequently taken to be one of those pieces. Students and teachers become disconnected from school ('work') rather than finding the pattern to connect this one aspect into their lives as a whole, each individual truly embodying a philosophy of lifelong learning (continuous learning for life--as part of life itself). Although lifelong learning has been expressed as being vital, we are still looking for ways to embody this philosophy within our educational practices.

My students and I are enjoying our experience in the Flex program. I suspect that a condition of connectedness, as opposed to disconnectedness (Bateson, 1994) within a 'living' philosophy of life long learning and personal responsibility for it, has a lot to do with the content I perceive to be experienced in the program. I have engaged in exploring the live(d) experiences of myself and my students in an effort to learn about (find possible meanings within) what it is that is going on in this space which has led to the contentment.

Schools are unique places. Most people will agree that they are places where teaching and learning take place, but do many of us really look at what actually goes on 'in there'? For me, and my students as part of who I am, (we) find ourselves in a location between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as live(d) and part of what we bring are our own philosophies⁵ of school, of learning, of teaching, of living. They are all there as we compose our own lives like patch-work quilts⁶ made up of many pieces; the chronologies of our lives, family, friends, work, hobbies, and ways of being that can live in all aspects of our lives as one.

Who I am (be)coming and the way I am in all aspects of my life has a profound effect on who I am as a teacher and vice versa. There is no way of separating the rest of

⁵Philosophy: The inquiry into the most comprehensive principles of reality, in general, or of some limited sector of it such as human knowledge or human values. The love of wisdom and the search for it.

⁶Metaphor used by Bateson, M.,(1989). *Composing a Life*. Penguin Books, USA.

my life from my life as a teacher, it is part of me and I want to BE as I am in all aspects of my life.

When I think of making my quilt I figure I'll have to tie dye it afterwards, a wash of swirls and colours to pull the rest of the quilt together under the guise of ME. I am the dye which runs through everything I do, the colours locating the pieces from my accumulated experiences which have brought me to where I am now and lead me into never-ending futures.

From the beginning of this particular journey, I have experienced the tensions involved in teaching, finding myself in the midst of differences between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived, knowing what I am 'supposed' to teach, perceiving what is important to teach and trying to create a hybrid of the two. It is my aim to live peacefully within the generative nature of this tension and it is for the inquiry into the 'in between' that I have used my studies as a catalyst for reflecting on my own teaching practice as part of my life.

Can the tensions of teacher education be experienced in such a way that its potential--as a catalyst for transforming schools and the knowledges cultivated there--becomes a possibility felt by its participants ? (Britzman, 1991, p. 32)

Physically, as one moves to *Step up to Seven Stars*, one raises her arms, crossed, with fisted hands to protect the forehead as in preparation for a blow to the head. One needs to prepare for mental stimulus as well as physical. Stars are bright lights in the darkness, they cause wonder and can be used to navigate by.

...the wise person creates a personal constellation and navigates unerringly by it. That is why those who follow the Tao are considered incredible. Actually, they have simply picked where they are going and are making their way towards those goals.
(Ming-Doa, 1996, p.86)

MOVEMENT THREE

STRIKE EARS WITH FIST
Making Learning Happen

雙拳貫耳

"It is not easy to find happiness in ourselves,
and impossible to find it elsewhere."
-Agnes Repplier

Teachers have difficulty hiding behind desks. By nature of their 'job' they are right out there in the open with real, live, human beings watching them, waiting. One can get oneself tied in a knot without a clear understanding of what one's role as a teacher really is, and consequently end up trying in vain to force learning to occur. The difficulty is that you can't read what teaching is in a dictionary or a book. You must live it and constantly reflect back on what comes together to embody what teaching is all about.

Each person is calibrated by experience, almost like a measuring instrument for difference, so discomfort is informative and offers a starting point for new understanding. (Bateson, 1994, p.17)

The last two years in particular have been characterized by much discomfort and frustration with teaching for me. This has indeed created a vantage point from which to reflect on my teaching. Pivot forward after standing on one leg to bring both arms around in large circles, hands clenched in fists, to *Strike (tiger's) Ears With Fists*. Notice the opportune moment to stare the tiger in the eyes.

I have a very 'interesting' Science 9 class this year. (This is a general perception, not just my own). I have been trying to come up with ideas to promote the most benefit for the most children. Just recently I set up an entire parallel program to the science 9 program that I am presently teaching. A group of students were not having success in my original program and consequently, given their past educational success (or lack there of), home lives and learning disabilities (to name a few) their self esteems were lowered and they were becoming behavior problems. The parallel program set up opportunities for success in increments. They would start off with very short reading assignments from some science modular books (1-3 pages long only) followed by a worksheet to focus the main ideas. Completing these and doing two cumulative assignments at the end (which could be repeated until they were mastered) would guarantee them a pass. This was set up to be very easy to achieve so that hopefully they would be encouraged by their success. The students all seemed very encouraged by this arrangement so I sent a letter home to describe it to their parents. With one exception the parents were extremely happy

that I had put in the amount of effort necessary to give their children another chance (these children had all been 'failures' in the past- most parents had apparently given up). The exception however was a very angry mother who was appalled at the idea of her son focussing on the minimum requirements for the course to ensure a pass. She felt I was labeling him as a 'minimum essentials' student and that she would rather have him fail and repeat if he could not do the work of the 'regular program'. I tried to explain to her that they were both 'regular' programs just different options, with one better suited to students who needed a definite incremental focus to get them on the right track, experiencing success with smaller tasks first. She calmed down a bit but it was clear that she still felt it was putting her son in a 'negative category', however contrary to her expression of concern she gave consent for her son to take the optional route. I felt very badly about this interaction, mostly for her son. He is the most behaviorally disruptive in the class, his parents are divorced, his mother obviously has very high expectations of him and his self esteem is very low. Why do I focus on this one incident (what I cannot do for one student, and his mother's negative feedback) rather than on all the other positive ones? Why don't I focus on the mother who thanked me for finally turning her son on to school again?

In T'ai Chi you start off as a beginner. You learn the basic surface structure of all the moves first before you go into 'ongoing' and continue to learn the moves on a deeper level for the rest of your life.

There seems to be something important to me, to be involved in a number of things and be successful at them. If I have any so-called 'free time' I fill it even though I get frustrated not having any 'down time' or flexible time to be available when things just 'show up'. I spend a great deal of time teaching and I have involved myself in a school committee to promote positive change plus two district committees. As well, I am on the future designs committee, the standards committee for the district on significant outcomes and I am the sponsor for the student's council at my school. Further, I have signed up for a pottery course and have started my masters . The last four weekends in a row I have gone to Vancouver twice, planned a craft weekend for 12 women and planned a surprise 30th birthday party with 30 people and I am now planning an open house with invitations to 78 people !

You can be told over and over again, "square your hips", "don't let your body move beyond your knee", but until you experience it for yourself and really know what it feels like, you make the same mistakes with the movements every time.

I have said that I enjoy being 'busy' and that I wouldn't be happy unless I was. Well, I've been trying to be very honest with myself regarding this and I've come to the immediate conclusion that I've been acting contradictorily. I've been brought up to believe that being well-rounded in sports, intellectual matters, creative and social matters, and to be successful at each and to do them to the best of one's ability, is very important. Consequently I work very hard to get a lot of a variety of things done. But then I complain that I do not have any time for things that might come up--like a movie or reading a good book, going to a school concert or just taking a hot bubble bath by candlelight. I think I want to slow down and relax more, do some slower things like read more good books rather than running all over the place to meetings, pottery classes etc. One thing I am really not getting in, is exercise and this is not good. I get the feeling I need to do less in order to do more but don't know what I can (am willing to) 'cut out'. Everything seems to have an important status to me. I seem to always be in a great hurry to get somewhere, achieve a goal, and often forget to enjoy where I'm at.

Not like Pooh, the most effortless Bear we've ever seen.

"Just how do you do it Pooh?"

"Do what?" asked Pooh.

"Become so Effortless."

"I don't do much of anything," he said.

"But all those things of yours get done."

"They just sort of happen," he said...

Tao does not do, but *nothing* is not done.

(Hoff, 1983, p. 69-70)

Being at peace with myself is a very important state to be in. If I am not at peace with myself how am I to be the best and do the best I can for others? If I am not happy, how am I to pass on happiness to others? If my self-esteem is not in tact, how am I to help build the self-esteem, or create an environment to encourage it in others? This can become an entangled web, since by being a teacher, I come in contact with so many impressionable souls, that the very thought of making sure

that I, myself am living these 'conditions' causes the stress which may cause them to deteriorate. But it is so important. Teaching is a career that can never be mastered. Every situation is new and there are always improvements to be made. Being cognitively aware of this is not enough. I must develop an attitude which pervades everything else; I can do my best for my students but I am not a god and cannot change the world. As Confucius says, "It's better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness." My attitude must be, to be fully satisfied and happy with each individual small good that occurs from my teaching and not focus on the things which I cannot hope to accomplish in the relatively short time I see my students. Strings of baby steps will go further than trying to move in leaps and bounds. Being aware is one thing, a beginning, but how does one fully change one's attitude?

T'ai Chi utilizes the larger muscle groups in the body, gently stretching them, releasing unnecessary muscle tension.

I wanted to finish high-school to get to university, finish university to get to teach. I wanted to get married, then it was to get a house, now I look to the future to finish my masters, have children, and have a possible career change. There's always something more to achieve. When I really think about it, who really cares? It would be much better to concentrate on the now, enjoy each day rather than be racing so hard to get somewhere that doesn't exist because once you've got there it's moved ahead again.

The stretching also benefits the connecting joints, tendons and ligaments, taking them through their full range of motion to achieve maximum flexibility and reduce the natural deterioration of the joints.

I keep filling space with more things. I tell people I enjoy being busy but I presently feel that it may be better doing less. Does my desire to slow down and have some 'softer' activities in my life outweigh my desire for the unwritten praise for doing a lot, getting it done quickly and doing it well? I guess the bottom line is whether or not one will burn oneself out if they don't change, and what will the effects be on other important people in one's life (spouse, family and friends)? It

all seems to come down to what is the meaning of life for me and how does that jibe with others in my life?

Taoist T'ai Chi helps restore proper alignment of the spine with the shoulders and pelvis. At the same time, stretching and rotating the entire spine helps to develop or maintain flexibility and strengthen the back while naturally correcting posture.

I have undergone a great deal of inner turmoil in determining how I wanted to live my life with teaching a part of it. I struggled continuously with whether or not I was doing the right thing. I was even concerned that my journal writing was always getting very selfish (all about myself and doing what was best for me). That bothered me too, especially after reading van Manen. I felt that if I was to be a very good teacher I should be concentrating on Pedagogy and be discussing concern for students in my journal writing more often and working on developing the 'virtuous' characteristics that are essential to good pedagogy.

...a sense of vocation, love and caring for children, a deep sense of responsibility, moral intuitiveness, self-critical openness, thoughtful maturity, tactful sensitivity toward the child's subjectivity, and interpretive intelligence, a pedagogical understanding of the child's needs, improvisational resoluteness in dealing with young people, a passion for knowing and learning the mysteries of the world, the moral fibre to stand up for something, a certain understanding of the world, active hope in the face of prevailing crises, and not the least, humor and vitality... this is a tall order for any human being. (Van Manen, 1992, p.21)

I would certainly love to be this kind of person and I have been trying so hard to get 'there', but it is a scary thing for someone like me who has always tried to excel in what she did. You cannot excel in these qualities, for the very nature of trying to excel in them takes away from them; there is no 'there'. I can only open myself up to live them, be someone who is aware of these virtues in a relaxed way and in the awareness they are more likely to come.

The gentle movement of T'ai Chi stimulates the nerves which exit through the spinal column providing a balancing effect on the nervous system and the other bodily systems it governs.

She is a teacher. Heather really enjoys teaching but sometimes she really dislikes being a teacher and everything that goes with the 'job' of teacher. She muses that she'd rather be a person who teaches, and questions whether she could do that in some other capacity rather than for the public school system. She smiles as she thinks that she could do it as a mother which is a very strong desire of hers. Could she do it anywhere else and get paid and enjoy the positive teaching aspects without the frustrating teacher aspects? Heather figures at this point that she seems to have a very narrow view of what is 'out there' in the world. A very strong component of the quality of life she wishes to have is found in teaching--fulfilling, rewarding, enriching, fun. But a lot of the things she wishes to avoid are found in the vocation of being a teacher in the public school system. As Heather sees it, she has a few choices; look for a career which more fully embodies the aspects that fit her view of quality of life, change her views on what quality of life is, change her perception of the vocation of teaching so that it fits her view of quality life or stay with the way things are. No matter where she goes, because of all the external factors of our society, there are likely going to be things that don't fit into the quality of life scheme she ponders. It may be that there is a better vocation and she may change some day. But equally important, if not more so, is the perception aspect. One has to be able to change their perception and behaviors to meld their vocation with their life so that quality abounds for enhanced quality of life under any conditions. This at least sounds convincing. Thus, Heather is determined to take another look at the characteristics she's acquired throughout her life through interactions with key individuals. She contemplates that one of those, the desire to succeed and the tendency to be a perfectionist in whatever she does and the pattern she's gotten into to do more and more to receive the approval of her family, may be a big contributing factor. Somehow, she feels, she's got to break that pattern. The proverbial 'they' all say she's doing too much and at the same time are saying how wonderful she is for doing it and exclaiming that they don't know how she does it; it's amazing! Heather asks herself some critical questions. Would they really care if she stopped doing so much? Would it have any impact on how they feel about her? Is she the only one who feels she has to maintain her present level of productivity, or even do more? Probably. How does one re-work years and years of programming? Is it going to take the same amount of time?

With my ongoing struggle trying to deal with the question, "What would be a (peaceful, fulfilling, enjoyable) lifestyle and how does teaching fit in?", I've been coming up with some conflict in that the person that I am or want to be, often contradicts what I am able to do in the classroom for my students ('do for my'--key phrase ...unhealthy phrase). This just presents more questions like, am I motivated by wanting to have an impact on my students? This question is a bit worrisome. I don't want to be motivated by this. That would mean that what I do I am doing only for me and not my students. Even if I look at the idea of wanting to help them, that implies that I know what is best for them and have an agenda for them. I don't like that very much either. What I really want is to just BE (like Pooh in the Tao of Pooh); not that I want to be like Pooh but that I just want to BE. Then if I let my students just, BE, and just genuinely care for them and set up the best opportunities I can for potential learning experiences then what will be will be (reminds me of a song--smile), I've just given it as much of a chance as I can for it to be something good and given my students the responsibility for their own learning. I feel good about looking at my teaching this way, settled, unflustered. I would like to live my life this way as well. Sometimes I think that I get involved in doing so much because I think it is good to do many different things; I lose touch with doing things because I enjoy them. I would, again, just like to BE and if an activity or an experience presents itself I can then genuinely enjoy it and relax. I think that this would lead to a more peaceful existence and my career of teaching would then just be lived like the rest of my life. It sounds so simple but it is kind of a revelation. I think the key is not to actively work at putting it into action which is what I would normally do, being goal oriented, but rather, be aware of my new way of thinking, relax and let it happen with an uncluttered mind. I think that this is possible although it is hard to put into words. I am beginning to find another mental state which is a lot more peaceful. The process is very slow mind you, but I have no doubt it's worth the time (I can't say effort because that's not what it is simply because of the state, it just takes time and that's O.K.)

I was really intense last year with my classes. This year has been better and is getting better yet. I attribute this to a gradual change in awareness of how I want to be in order to be at peace. I want to clarify for when I read this at a later date that that peace does not necessarily mean quiet or non-energetic but just that there is minimal inner turmoil.

It seems so easy, just to peacefully be, because it feels so good. Why then is it so often hard to achieve?

By trying to achieve something, it eludes us. The nature of Tao suggests that we look at whatever we are trying to achieve as an inexhaustible vessel which produces things from no-thingness (Dalton, 1994). It is the natural flow of things, and in its vastness it is the ultimate simplicity.

There will always be some 'system' from within which I will teach, thus the importance of the space in between, from without of which I may exist, peacefully and 'let' learning happen. This space between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived is manifest in a live(d) experience of it.

MOVEMENT FOUR

FAIR LADY WORKS SHUTTLES

Learning- A Lived Experience

玉女穿梭

"Once you start kids thinking you better watch out
'cause they don't stop too quick you know."

-student

This movement comprises the live(d) experience of myself and my students in the space between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived.

I don't believe it, it's 11 pm and I have to get up at 4:45 am to go to Vancouver's Science World on a field trip with the Grade 10's and R.M.. I keep thinking about my masters thesis, from method to metaphor.

My whole masters program is becoming my thesis. I need to start writing it beginning with my earliest journal writing in searching out who I am and the chronologies of my life, searching for the Way and BEing and how that has tied in with developing a reflective philosophy for teaching and learning.

My cat is pretty impressed I've chosen to keep him company at this hour. His purrs are resonant but alas for him, my pen is more important right now.

I believe I should just start re-reading and re-writing my journal entries, then after I collect thoughts from my students I can weave them into the text of my reflections. I need a metaphor here; shadows, reflections in a pool of water, ripples, weaving material, a kaleidoscope, fractals (independently iterating patterns coming together), voices and echoes...a metaphor from the Tao. The T'ai Chi move, *Fair Lady Works Shuttles*.

Upon reflection of myself as a person who teaches I came to take a very close look at teaching/learning, living reflectively in the space between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived. Because my students are a significant part of this space, they play a significant role in the reflection of it.

When everyone knows beauty is beauty,
 this is bad.
 When everyone knows good is good,
 this is not good.
 So being and nonbeing produce each other;
 difficulty and ease complement each other,
 long and short shape each other,
 high and low contrast with each other,
 voice and echoes conform to each other,
 before and after go along with each other.
 So sages manage effortless service
 and carry out unspoken guidance.
 All beings work, without exception:
 if they live without possessiveness,
 act without presumption,
 and do not dwell on success,
 then by this very nondwelling
 success will not leave.
 -Tao Te Ching

This is the essence of the space in which I find myself as a teacher in the school system. It is a space between differences, neither existing without the other, a third dimension between the rigidity of pattern and the upheaval of chaos. It is colourful, creative, natural, ever-changing, but within patterned bounds, much like a fractal. A fractal is in between pattern and chaos, simplicity in the midst of complexity; a snowflake is a fractal. Without complexity, there is no simplicity, one defines the other. In the context of teaching in the school system we have the chaos of every day interaction between myself and my students, themselves and the environment in its totality within the patterns of a pre-existing system. The key is to creatively pull out of the chaos and iterate within the pattern of planned curricula, a dynamic loop of positive feedback involving students in the study of curricula not just as a body of knowledge but as an extension of themselves. This does not mean that everything we teach requires a direct 'application'. Some things may, which is good. But even more so, students can be brought to a point where they understand the curriculum is a vehicle to explore their own minds and build from existing interests while developing new ones, as well as curiosity. I can't 'make' students get interested, I can only bring them to places (orientations within their minds) which encourage interest. A large part of the 'bringing' involves modelling keen interest, excitement and curiosity in learning

myself, being positive and encouraging while respecting differences, but setting up challenges (potential opportunities for students to push themselves past safe boundaries). "...So being and nonbeing produce each other...". This is the space in which real learning can take place, a place of tension, discomfort and ugliness but without those neither can there be peace, comfort or beauty. "...difficulty and ease complement each other...". It is also within this space that both my students and myself can really be heard between the ministry 'have-tos' and a 'free for all' "...voice and echoes conform to one another..."

As van Manen aptly points out, spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality are productive categories for the process of phenomenological question posing, reflecting and writing (1990). Because this thesis is looking at the fundamental existential themes of being and meaning within my lifeworld and my students as part of my lifeworld, it seemed appropriate to group our experiences of our world, our in-between space, within them.

Thirty spokes converge on a single hub,
but it is in the space where there is nothing
that the usefulness of the cart lies.
Clay is molded to make a pot,
but it is in the space where there is nothing
that the usefulness of the clay pot lies.
Cut out doors and windows to make a room,
but it is in the spaces where there is nothing
that the usefulness of the room lies.
Therefore,
Benefit may be derived from something,
but it is in nothing that we find usefulness.
-Tao Te Ching

Fair Lady Works Shuttles comprises four moves, pushing in a counter-clockwise sequence into each of the four corners of an imaginary room. At each corner one arm is extended out and one arm is held up with palm of hand facing out from forehead as if looking out into the distance and shading the eyes from the sun.

Creeping Low Like a Snake, lived space (spatiality) is a positioning which helps define our being; it is felt space. It is connected to feelings of comfort, productivity,

freedom...How various lived spaces are defined for us contributes to our lifeworld. For this thesis spatiality was revealed through the living and imposed environment(s) while living in the spaces was described with primary concern for flexibility and choice.

The Environment(s)

The art of teaching invites this inspection of its boundaries and territory, for if teaching is an aesthetic experience, it is also a form of labour and accommodation to bureaucracy. (Grumet, 1988, p.78)

If you are a smart student you don't do good work you do what they want you to.

What are you learning in school?

How to buck the system (laughter).

One thing I've learned is how to tell people what they want to hear. Like I have my version of the truth and then I have the version of the truth that I know they want to hear and I find a compromise in between, right. If it's more to your side it's about a C+ if it's more to their side it's an A, so I usually have about a B average.

Curriculum comes from the ministry, the ministry comes from the government, the government represents the people. It's a big circle, like a cog (laughter).

Why do you think they picked the stuff they did?

Well they picked it because, from an external view, it should be life.--I don't know--ahh...

Does it matter what they pick?

Not really. It matters but-- We need the basics, that's obvious, but some of the extras, they're useless.

What are the basics?

Reading, writing and 'rithmetic.

Learning and dealing with people.

Can you use anything to get at that?

Well just being in an atmosphere with lots of people around, you learn to deal with people and you learn to be with people. I mean there's a lot of that in school, learning how to learn. I think you just get used to it.

Another school year has begun, my fifth to be accurate but if I include the internship program which was definitely a full year of teaching, that would make it my sixth year. To some extent each year has felt like my first up until this moment. Perhaps it's because, being 'young' in the district, I am always getting laid off and often rehired at new schools with new subjects to teach.

School might be a model that works for some people but are we trying to put square pegs into round holes? Is it a flexible system?

You're asking us to reflect on teaching everyone as a whole; we're not everyone else, we can't do that. We have a hard enough time figuring it out for ourselves once in a while. 'Cause, ahh, when you try to figure something out as an institution (that's what school is) you have to take into account human stupidity 'cause we're all basically really moronic; we're lazy, we're cowards and we try to get out of everything and don't want to commit to any actual work, so you have to take that into account. You can't really say

something and have everybody agree on it. It would be impossible.

Creeping Low Like a Snake is a very difficult movement. It requires a lot of strength. It's like doing the splits only you stay off the ground except for the bubbling springs.

If the idea is that you want school to work, what system should it work by? I don't think it should work by a system, like the idea of it being a system doesn't work. It has to be super individualized and maybe to the point where you may not even call it a school.

Do you have a picture in your mind?

No, do you want to be a radical revolutionary and think up some new idea? After a while then the idea becomes an institution and it would just go back to the same way. I think the idea of school is dysfunctional as far as learning goes. I think we need a radical upset, maybe even don't include these buildings.

It makes you think like learning only takes place in these places--it really creates a lot of lines.

One is in a very vulnerable position *Creeping Low Like a Snake*; one's arms are outstretched and wide open while all one's strength is concentrated on getting down very low and pushing back up again to stand on one leg like the *Golden Cock*, as lived space connects to lived time where change is found. The lowness of ones' position in this movement may serve a certain vantage point.

Is change needed in the school system?

So much change is needed. How long has this institution been existing? Way too long, but the thing is the institution doesn't want to change. It's too expensive and takes far too much time and requires too much thought.

So you're still caught in that space between the system and the real lives living within it. Maybe I shouldn't ask you what the experience is like but what could it be like? You still have everybody the way they are as individuals and you are in this system, basically--

Cog, cog, cog...

What can you do with that? Can you do anything with it?

To do stuff, first you talk to lots of people like the administrators. I don't know how many people you have to talk to but to do something you have to go through so much red tape and just so much garbage that it's near impossible aside from dynamite.

That's what I used this year, dynamite, like I blew up everything! I just went ahead and "I'm doing this and I'm doing this and you catch up with me." And the system had to.

Personally, I think if they stopped the public school system and got rid of all schools it would basically go back to the way it was before where if you had money you could learn and the teachers, they would be an elite group then. Since they wouldn't be in the institution they could charge however much they wanted for someone to learn from them.

An individual stands there and has all these wonderful ideas and then actually looks at what they have to face and then runs away and hides. I'd do that.

So if that's a 'given' (hypothetically) can we make a 'space' within it all?

For everybody or for the individual?

For the individual, can we make a space in this environment for each individual? I guess each individual can only decide himself. Can you make a space for you to get out of it something that you need to get out of it?

Yah, it's hard though, you can't just sit back, you've got to take the initiative.

Do you think it has to happen at the individual level or is there any way for, let's say the Flex program? Can this program create a space within everything that is already in existence, to do something neat, to provide an experience for individuals that is a good one?

Dunno.

Well I think in theory sure but there are so many obstacles it's hard to know 'cause there's more obstacles than we can guess. I have no idea how much bureaucracy there is preventing such things from happening. In theory I'm sure we could create some system of educating, not just one system, it would have to be more than one system, a bunch of systems that people kind of fit into and really enjoy their learning experience or at least get something from it while hopefully enjoying it, but it can't happen because there's too much red tape--like maybe it could--I don't know.

When I went to the massage therapist early on in the year, he said my muscles were really quite relaxed. That was particularly excellent for the beginning of the school year (especially starting at a new school). I think that is yet another testimony to the

fact that my personality and teaching style match very well with the Flex program. Others have pointed out and I agree, that I've tended to set up Flex style programs at other schools but the general 'system' didn't lend itself as well to it as the overall structure of the Flex program.

What about the Flex program and it's flexibility?

I think it works best where it's at.

Could it be taken further?

For some people. If you were to take it further you'd have to downsize the number of people who could go further with it 'cause not all these people in this Flex program can really work on a schedule that is totally free like you know some couldn't take the responsibility of so much freedom. Like some could. Some could enjoy a step further of the Flex program where, I don't know exactly what it would look like, but it might involve less being in the school and stuff like that.

Followers of Tao rarely rule anything out because they believe any choice they make is dependent upon circumstance rather than preconceived notions.

But how can you tell? How can you tell if somebody can handle that? You can say, "O.K. sure you can get into it." and then you can find out that they screwed themselves over, because at some stage we're still kids. You have to kind of say sometimes their words don't mean what they're actually saying and you have to take your ahh, like guardian aspect in that somehow. You also have to let us--you have to realize that we are getting our own reasoning capacity and that we sometimes figure it out for ourselves.

There is a practice move called Tui Shou, The Dance of Pushing Hands in which two people push on each other's hands in a smooth rotational movement as they go back and forth letting their weight move into each other's bubbling springs.

No longer can we tell whether it is the student offering himself to the teacher or the teacher offering herself to the student. We see each of the two beings mirroring the other in pure reflection. (Huang and Lynch, 1995, p. 4)

I wonder what would happen if everyone really started pushing around in the education system to get what they want?

It would have to change because the thing is, the walls are set, they'd just have to be pushed so much that you'd have to take them down otherwise they'd fall on your head.

Happy Hallowe'en ! Schools are neat places where a lot of energy can be harnessed. I was a devil today. The kids really like it when the teachers dress up. Our T.A. (homeroom) even won a prize in the pumpkin carving contest.

Nobody wants to do anything that's not enjoyable. Me, I like school because I like to learn but I don't like to be stuck inside this one building all day with the same thousand people. If I was allowed to go outside, maybe I could go get a pass and go home for a couple of hours and work at home. I mean, I know, maybe right now it's not reasonable and maybe for some people its not an option but in the future maybe that would be a good thing. Some people need to go outside sometimes, and breath, get a little fresh air you know.

I know that sometimes it's easy for me to go home and spend the whole day doing work at home and I get a lot more accomplished or if I go work in the library I get a lot more accomplished if I'm on my own with no distractions and quiet; it just works better.

I don't know, I learn better if I'm not quite in the same place every time. Like sometimes if our Chemistry class is moved it's like different so its not like the same boring thing. Even a different room, it's still a room but its different. Like it doesn't seem so monotonous.

I wouldn't come to school if I didn't realize that to do what I want to do I have to graduate and I have to graduate from college so I think I just deal with it because I know without those things I couldn't do what I want to do so I just have to live through it and bear it until one day it pays off.

I would enjoy it if I could go to one school and take all the courses that I want. I think I would enjoy that because I want to take economics and the only school that offers economics is Vic. High and I don't want to go to Vic High because of the Flex courses that aren't there and then there's calculus...They don't offer calculus anywhere except at Oak Bay and Mt.Doug but I don't want to go to those schools to take all my courses, just calculus.

I think there are a lot of courses that kind of complement each other, like they kind of correlate. If we could have those courses at different schools like a school for business, and one school arts oriented; every school would specialize and that meant if you were interested in--well I don't think they would have a Law school or anything, but if you were going to go into Law there would be this one school that had all these different Law courses.

Yah but then also choice.

That's exactly what they were going to do and we were all protesting.

No you were going to have to jump from school to school, take math at one and English at another.

I think if every school was on semester we'd be in high heaven and say someone wanted to go into Law and Business and then Fine Arts or something, she goes one semester of each and could go to the appropriate school one at a time.

Learning relates to school in that school is specifically designed to teach us what we might otherwise not learn in the outside world. You learn more than what we learn in the classroom, you learn socially by interacting with others attending the same school.

Like learning in the rest of your life, people think of it as during school and after school. During school I learn and after school "I watch teenage mutant ninja turtles." You know it would be nice if there was more blending. I've done a little home schooling; it becomes a wonderful experience because it all becomes blended together and if you don't feel like working you don't have to and if you do feel like working you can, because you need to work and then you start making yourself feel like working.

It is becoming important to recognize and value new kinds of fluidity and openness to learning at every stage of the life cycle, in home, school, and workplace. More flexible boundaries of the self open up attention to the environment that may ultimately be essential to survival, for it is not the individual organism that survives but the organism in the environment that gives it life. (Bateson, 1994, p.74)

This was a good week. I'm still learning names... 215 in this program. J.C. is organizing some photocopied pictures of students from last years' annual onto sheets of paper for me with names of Flex students to help me remember them better. J.P. has also volunteered to be my assistant on EFGH days to do filing, keep the newt happy in a clean tank, gather information off the internet and help organize field trips. I want to find a senior student to help with tutoring and

preparing some fun math workshops. K.R. and E.M. want to help out in the classroom too. T'ai Chi has been going well also. I was demonstrating it to some students today who were being hyper.

They were all gathered around so willing to help. They made signs and posters:

MATH
RESOURCE CENTER
 Beyond 'text book math'
CHECK IT OUT !

They made a list of the resource books available (twice due to a computer bomb), numbered the books and made sign-up sheets. They created a February calendar complete with R.M.'s birthday on February 29th (he'll be 9 years old !!--that explains a lot !). These were grade nine girls. It made me think about what teaching elementary school must be like when kids keen on helping create a neat environment! I had previously thought that I would like to try teaching elementary school for those reasons but now it seems I've found a space to have the best of both worlds. It's really quite wonderful.

Students stay in my room over lunch. I bought a kettle to put in my room today for tea and cup of soup for myself and the students. I really like the atmosphere. I like the place of learning my students and I have created. It's comfortable, inviting and stimulating. I enjoy being there and believe it or not, that's a novel concept. I wonder how many teachers can really say they enjoy being in their classroom, that it is aesthetically pleasing. I think we really underestimate the importance of aesthetics to human beings sometimes and particularly in schools.

Grumet (1988, p.80) draws from philosophers such as Johan Huizinga, Susanne Langer, F. David Martin and Herbert Marcuse to define aesthetic experience:

1. Participation in aesthetic experience is voluntary
2. Aesthetic experience is bounded in time and space
3. Aesthetic experience is not subordinated to instrumental purposes
4. Aesthetic forms express knowledge about feeling
5. Aesthetic forms express an implicit acquiescence or resistance to social and political conventions
6. The meaning of aesthetic forms is constituted in the dialogue that takes place between and artist's work and its audience

A grade eight student and I went to the S.P.C.A. yesterday after school and picked up a guinea pig for the class. He's so cute, and purrs too. It was a hard decision; we could have brought them all back with us including the rabbits, in particular, Flopsie.

Flexibility and Choice

The other idea I had which is now possible because of the flexibility in the Flex program is to set up some workshops in some blocks for students to be able to participate in the mathematics of paper folding, making hexaflexagons, fractals, math in nature, exploring the mobius strip...exciting possibilities...

Even what appears to be a repetition is often a return at the next level of a spiral or, more mysteriously, the other side of a mobius strip.
(Bateson, 1994, p. 29)

That's one thing I think is really good about Flex because I mean, its my fourth year so I kind of know the ins and outs of it. One day if I'm sitting there and I cannot work, I just cannot work, it's just ehh. I just don't work for a day and the next day I can feel totally in the mood for work and I can do a whole math unit if I want to. I mean it just depends, you can pace yourself better I think. For me it's better than sitting in a regular classroom. If I had to go and didn't want to learn on like a Chemistry or Physics day I'd be at a major loss.

In attempting to bring the 'human-ness' into math and enliven the subject I've introduced the students to projects with a lot of choice. The amount of choice itself does a lot to approach my goal. I wonder what actual transformations of the concept of mathematics goes on with the students just reading a very long list containing a variety of topics all related to math?

There's work and there's school so I want to get my school work done and that takes organization. I set high standards for myself, grade levels and stuff like that, so I have to

strive to meet those but sometimes I'm too hard on myself. I like to learn and stuff but I like to learn stuff outside of school that interests me. Like I know what I want to learn and I know what I find interesting and so I think with my schoolwork, even though I want to get good marks and stuff, I rush through. I always rush. For instance, sometimes when I come to school everyone's talking and I'm like writing, writing and my hand will be hurting and I'll be doing all this stuff 'cause I don't want to take it home. I hate doing homework. I hate having my school run into the rest of my life. There's a really strong boundary there. Sometimes it has to get crossed but I really get annoyed when it does. Personally I don't like school but I'm going to go to university for sure. I aspire to great things, I mean, the high-school system, I don't like the high-school system.

School teaches the contextualization of learning and the importance of keeping different areas of life separate: home from workplace, Sundays from weekdays, and work from play. (Bateson, 1994, p. 203)

If you could make it any way you wanted, how would you make it?

Me, I would make it more elective based. I could take what I wanted to take to get me where I wanted to go. I mean I have to take some things because I don't know until I take them, "Hey maybe I like this." I guess a lot of it is because teenagers kinda slack so I guess they have to make us take it because so many people in this high-school right now, if people said they didn't have to take school, they'd just all 'shoom', walk right out.

So you think generally then, there should be more choice in school?

Way more choice!

Oh yah.

I like drop-ins myself because I can do everything pretty much on my own and then if there is a topic that I need to come for I can drop in but I don't have to come for something I don't need to.

It's neat to see students take re-takes on test because they've learned from their mistakes and believe they can get a better representative mark for what they now know. Isn't that what education is all about? Learning!

Drop-ins don't work for me, I don't think it solves individual problems. I just like to come in individually when I'm having a problem.

I think demands are good.

If you went back to demands though, that's where you're forced to be in a classroom, it's forced learning. I still think it's better to learn on your own when you want to. Demands are O.K. if something really important needs to be stressed upon the students but I really think it should be done as they want.

Learning and teaching are both fundamental for human adaptation, but not all human societies segregate them from the flow of life into institutional boxes. (Bateson, 1994, p. 196)

I think if the person seems to be doing well all through the year and then they all of a sudden stop and get behind, it's usually a sign that they are stuck on something, or maybe that they had to get caught up in humanities.

I think if they had a bendable schedule where instead of 10 things you had to do for the year they gave you 20 and you choose your 10.

I think it's really important that the teacher enjoy what they teach and the teacher really understands it and is an expert at what they teach, then out of the 20 they could pick the one's they like and if they like it better, they're going to teach it better.

If its purpose is to help you think better then you can tailor it to that. Tailoring using complex math to helping students think better all relates back to having flexibility in what you're learning. I agree, helping you learn or relate mathematical formulas or problem solving methods to real life, is going to help you a lot and make you think smarter or whatever but it's not directly targeted at doing that. It's targeted at making you learn new formulas and things rather than making you work on your mind.

The most important thing to learn is what will be useful for you later in life, that's why I think that each person's curriculum should be flexible in as far as what it details, unfortunately that would be exploited by the slackers.

Sometimes you can't have a direct routine that you always follow. I think it's a little bit healthy sometimes to have a change from the norm of a 5 day school week and just go out and do something fun.

Step up to Grasp Bird's Tail, as lived body (corporeality) both consciously and subconsciously reveals our being in the world, how we hold ourselves, our expressions, our positioning; how our bodies reflect disconnection or connection to our world. For this thesis corporeality was present within a connection to life and personal style as well as finding enjoyment in learning.

The rain is streaming down right now. I really enjoy the steady patter of the water slapping against the ground. I ran in it tonight, my favorite time to run. I think the

feeling of the rain against my face is so refreshing and just the right touch stimulus, like standing in the shower in the morning after I'm already clean and should be getting out. It just feels so good and the rain is even better! It's fresher, more natural. It was a good run, a good day to get started back into a healthy routine. Rain sure helps make you feel cozier inside. Time to curl up in a big chair and read... or journal.

The self fluctuates through a lifetime and even through the day, altered from without by changing relationships and from within by spiritual and even biochemical changes... (Bateson, 1994, p. 66)

Enjoyment in Learning

Um yeah I like school. I like learning but I don't like learning stuff that I don't really care about like stuff that I don't think will benefit me in the future, like about pond scum. I'm in Physics, Chemistry and Biology but I don't want to be that in the future I want to be in like Law and Business so I'm kinda finding that learning about the life cycle of a Pine and the life cycle of a fern just pointless and so I don't enjoy going to that class, and he doesn't make it very interesting either, and I don't like learning things that bore me.

I think things are a lot easier if you enjoy them. Like school, half the people don't enjoy it so they don't see the positive in it so they don't try. Things intrigue me like when I'm with my dad. My dad's a very intelligent person so I know when I ask him something I know that he'll tell me and sometimes that'll just make my day, learning something new, like the saying, "You learn something new every day ."

It's so true you do--when you think about it.

I feel so much more relaxed and happy. I don't have to perform in front of a class as much in Flex and shovel knowledge into heads. The knowledge is made available and the students work to obtain it. The real learning happens with that process. I become a resource for obtaining that knowledge. Students appreciate my help rather than having the attitude, "teach me!". This is very good. It frees me up to work on creating a neat environment to optimize learning experiences. There are many more of the positive aspects of teaching these days.

I like to learn, I enjoy learning. That's the way I've been brought up my whole life. It's like learning things is good, not learning things is tedious and boring. I guess it's because of the way my parents are. My parents love to learn and my whole family loves to learn and so, I don't know, learning just becomes fun. But when there are pointless things, that's when it isn't as fun and that's when I don't enjoy it.

As a teacher you can always try something else that is new and stimulating. 'Variety is the spice of life.' That may be another reason why I'm fitting into Flex so well. Each day has a different format and there are opportunities to do so many different things; lessons, workshops, tutorials, field trips, flex time...

If you just stay positive everything will be fine(laughs).

You guys obviously enjoy learning, do you enjoy school?

Sometimes.

I enjoy school so much this year it's scary. Next year I know I'm not going to.

Can you tell me about that, why you enjoy it this year and why you don't think you will next year?

Well this year, I'm basically doing everything I want. There's nothing in there that I don't want to do; I'm in the

Flex program, just working through Flex the same way that I always have, I'm just doing tones of art and tones of music. I'm not actually required to do anything I don't want to but when it comes to next year, when you've got your 58 credits that you need.

58?

Yah, you need 58 to graduate. You need so many credits in grade 11 and you need so many credits in grade 12. You need a CAPP credit, you need a Fine Arts credit, you need an Industrial Arts credit. Just like, "Oh, geeh, I don't want to do that!" And I know that there's no flexibility as soon as you get out of grade 10. As soon as you get into actual High School, everyone's like pushing you out.

When one moves back and forth, shifting one's weight from foot to foot in a series of motions, reaching out and pulling back, one is engaged in *Stepping up to Grasp Bird's Tail* as our bodies reflect an ongoing struggle between connecting and disconnecting.

When it is fresh it is fun and you're just absorbing everything that is coming in and you don't have a set way of thinking, you don't have a, this is right and this is wrong, I want to learn this, I don't want to learn this. You're just absorbing things. If you suddenly had to learn quadratic equations you wouldn't find that very much fun. You [as a teacher] could get them started and you could probably get quadratic equations if you take them from all the way there.

If it is something that a child doesn't know and they can do it easily, and it's complicated for their age group and they know they're doing well, then they're happy.

Also a sense of unique accomplishment in a classroom is important. If everyone does it, doing the homework doesn't make you feel, "Oh boy I'm special."

When kids do stuff at home it's just for them and their own confidence, everyone is not doing it.

If you're not asked to do something and you do it you feel much better rather than being told to do it. Like my dad, "Vacuum the living room floor." "Do this or do that." I know they have to be done, they are part of my chores. If he doesn't tell me to do them and I do them I have no problem with that but if he comes up and he constantly reminds me to do them it gets on my nerves and makes me angry.

That's applicable to now, I find things that I'm not forced to learn, I learn way better than things I am forced to. Even reading books. I'll read a book that I want to learn. You read books? (laughs)--no--sorry. I'll read a book that I want to read way better. I hate reading books that I'm forced upon to read.

Connection to Life and Personal Style

I think a good place to start would be, with asking why, and start answering honestly. Like I think one thing with the education system today is (I don't know how off topic this is) but they are very concerned with teaching us WHAT like we need to learn that and we need to learn this but somewhere in the process there's been a failure to teach us WHY. Like why are we learning math, like there's a quote that goes something to the effect of, if you can't draw on 3,000 years of experience you're living hand to foot or hand to mouth, or something like that and all it means is that if you can't draw on human civilization, then you're living hand to mouth

and I think that's what we've done. We've immersed kids with information but we don't teach WHY. We don't teach values. We've got all this information but we don't know how to choose right from wrong; it's just a lot of cold hard facts and statistics. There's not a lot of whys and I wish there was more.

On each movement forward one must remember to square her hips, to reap the benefits of each movement. Even as the weight shifts to the back one remains facing forward.

Can you describe a tangible way that you would go about doing it differently?

Yes, I'd ask why a lot more as a teacher. We've been doing math for, well for me I've been doing math for 10, 11 years now and never once have I run into a math question that says, "Why are we doing math?" After 10 years of doing this I'm beginning to wonder, right and like there is no why. Why are we in humanities class? Why are we learning about the Roman period? You know it never comes out, never, not even once.

Why do you think you are?

Why do I think I am? Well ahh, I think I'm, I don't know. Yah like seriously I don't know. We haven't had much chance to explore it.

But what was your answer before when you said what you thought the purpose for education was?

Yah, self actualization, so we can get the tools so we can learn more and gives you options to learn more, but it isn't teaching us very well. It isn't teaching us how to think

very well about, like WHY? When somebody asks you why, you know, there's a big thought process involved in there.

Is the why inherent?

Wha 'at mean?

Well you've come up with the question WHY all by yourself and you've obviously thought about it...

Ya but I want to know what the answer is.

Does the answer matter?

Yah well I think the exploration does and I think the reason why a lot of kids aren't interested in what's going on, is there is no exploration for them. Nobody has told them to ask why, ah asked them to ask why, and they haven't done it on their own initiative so they're just--they're doing blindly.

It's like we're a big crowd of students all walking through a big tunnel and at the beginning we start off like little kids just going off to kindergarten and at the end we're people graduating from high-school. We're walking through a dark tunnel right, and some people look for the red exit sign and take the short cut, some people ask questions like, "What am I doing in this tunnel?" and some people will run through it.

What's at the end of the tunnel?

Some people will go through with their eyes closed and not notice anything.

Is there a light at the end of the tunnel?

Umm, personal freedom; freedom to choose a job, freedom to choose a life umm living without--no longer learning...as much as you would in school.

Learning is the fundamental pattern of human adaptation, but mostly it occurs before or after or in the interstices of schooling. Preoccupied with schooling, most research on human learning is focused on learning that depends on teaching or is completed in a specified context rather than on the learning that takes place spontaneously because it fits directly into life. (Bateson, 1994, p. 197)

It is interesting how the concept of lifelong learning seems to be only that, a concept; education and learning as a tunnel to get through rather than as the air around us to be breathed in every day. To consider that you are not 'free' until 'education' is over is disappointing. Shouldn't education being 'freeing' at all times?

Could you choose to enter another tunnel?

Maybe work is a different sort of a tunnel.

'Tunnels' is such a dark metaphor, being trapped into pieces of our life sectioned off from the others, school and work, as separate rather than a connected, wholistic metaphor for life in general, like the movements of T'ai Chi which are periodic, like a sine wave, and feed back into themselves over and over but never the same with each additional loop of the circle. There tends to be a general order but there doesn't have to be. A movement can be done on its own, one can start in the middle and finish at the beginning. Where one is at any particular moment is where one is and there is always another move that can be connected to for carrying on.

I think of it as more of a maze like we're trying to find our way through, right. Some kids get lost and some kids they make it through right. We're given our rough outline, our map, but some kids they see this maze; "My those walls are

only 10' tall and if we get two or three of us I'm sure we can get up on there. And some kids get up on the walls and they'll go through but they'll have a deeper understanding and a deeper meaning 'cause they've climbed those walls and they've seen the big picture and "they've been saved--Jesus Christ \$9.95"--sorry--but I think everybody should have the opportunity to take a look and maybe they should supply ladders even if some have a few missing rungs, or are well greased...

I have to say that the Flex program for me as a teacher has really helped me with ministry mandate and who I am because it connects with my style and gives me more flexibility to have students learn the way that is best for them. This is like a dream come true for me. So many people warned me, "Oh, be careful about the Flex program you'll get burned out, so much work, I wouldn't do that if I were you." It's wonderful. Yes it's a lot of work but all the work seems to be for a positive purpose. Before, I'd knock myself out and there would be very little returns for all the effort I put in.

I think that it connects it too, like when they teach you, like the two different types of learning that they teach you in school, like they give you the textbook and they say, "O.K., read this la-la-la-la." There are the facts that they put forth to you and then there is also the learning, like you have to learn how to have relationships with people and all that kind of stuff or like stuff you need to survive. Like cooking for instance or something like that, like when they connect stuff with your everyday basic subjects. When they connect to real life, connecting to stuff you don't learn in school (that you have to learn on your own), it can help you kinda go through those processes, like it helps motivate those things that you learn on your own.

Curriculum guides, in precisely specifying the content to be covered, have through omission removed implicitness from schooling: only the instructional objectives (parts) that have been linguistically carved out of the parent discipline are taught and tested; all else need not be covered. In attempting to cover the specified parts, teachers often produce a complicated set of disjointed parts which students find difficult to put back together in any coherent manner. We might ask whether such difficulty is inherent in the subject (eg., mathematics) or have we artificially produced the difficulty by reducing the subject to isolated skills and procedures which even if mastered, remain in the student's mind as isolated parts? (Sawada, 1989, p. 4)

I think you have to make it more interactive. You have to put the natural learning with the other learning; you have to experience things. Like we went to Germany and we just finished doing the holocaust and we went to a concentration camp, we walked through it and that plus learning about it, having a guest speaker and a video makes it more enjoyable. You have to see things happen. Doing labs and things is way better than just reading the textbook. Like not having the usual strict classroom, go out and experience it.

It is interesting that I find myself today, on the one hand, reading some back issues of Great Expectations, and on the other hand I am beginning a book by Madelaine Grumet called Bitter Milk which concerns itself with women in teaching and their lives as conception, contradiction and curriculum, as they balance a life at home with the one at 'work' and the nurturing involved in both. Here I find myself at that point in my life where I really want my own children. I believe Dave really does too. I catch myself thinking how my career will fit into all that...becoming a mother and still becoming as a teacher. They are both so deeply rooted in life, lived experience, that I can't help but feel that it will all unfold as manifestations of my life, as occasioned by (inter)actions with my husband, family, friends, colleagues, students and my new child. Is this where my Masters thesis will take me ultimately or where I will take it, because it is a reflection of the living moment that I find myself in? Maybe it hinges on that 'space' again between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived and how to exist there as who I am. A nurturer--a nurturer of lived moments, and be happy that I am female to be able to experience this at its ultimate in having a child, where Dave and I can bring her/him up through an infinite number of lived moments. Isn't that what life and living is all about? Isn't that what we should be getting back to with teaching?

IF I HAD MY LIFE TO LIVE OVER

I'd dare to make more mistakes next time.
 I'd relax, I would limber up.
 I'd be sillier than I have been this trip.
 I would take fewer things seriously.
 I would take more chances.
 I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers.
 I would eat more ice cream and less beans.
 I would perhaps have more actual troubles,
 But I'd have fewer imaginary ones.

You see, I'm one of those people who live sensibly hour by hour,
 day after day.
 Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had it to do over again,
 I'd have more of them.
 In fact, I'd try to have nothing else.
 Just moments, one after another,
 instead of living so many years ahead of each day.
 I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere
 without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat and a parachute.
 If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have.

If I had my life to live over,
 I would start barefoot earlier in the spring
 and stay that way later in the fall.
 I would go to more dances.
 I would ride more merry-go-rounds.
 I would pick more daisies.

-Nadine Stair

School pretty much has to be part of our lives.

It is our lives! (laugh)

We've spent most of our lives at school so far so I think it is a major part.

Are there ways to engage in learning to help you get more out of it, to be more connected to it?

It has to be a global part of your life so that you don't think school or work is something separate that you are doing just because you have to or for money so that you feel you're getting something from it and enjoying it also and as long as we can get enjoyment or we feel like we're gaining something

all the time and we feel it's building us or that we need to do that and we can realize the relevance and importance.

That's not how I think of it. I think of it more, well it can't be that interesting. Sometimes learning can be interesting but some stuff you have to learn that's not going to be interesting and, I don't know, new ideas for teaching that would make it all interesting but--

Basically we're in school to learn how to learn. We learn concepts not for their relevancy to the workplace but because--I don't know--another important thing about school I guess is to learn how to interact with others, not just curriculum.

Do you think it's important to be here?

Yea, otherwise you couldn't get a job.

Well school is our life now as funny as it sounds, it is. We have nothing else other than maybe a part time job outside of school but this is our life.

It should be flexible with the rest of your life. It should work with the rest of your life like projects and out of school activities and stuff like that.

Like cogs and gears.

I like that metaphor, can you expand a little?

They go together perfectly and they both spin, that's in theory. It doesn't always work, there's always some dirt.

What are all these cogs doing? I'm glad to see that they're spinning but what is this immense network of cogs accomplishing?

It's moving the machine of our life.

Is its goal to feed you and feed everyone? What's its goal when you go out there and you're another one of the spinning cogs?

Whoa...well, what is your goal? What does your cog do, that's what I want to know?

Self actualization.

If that meant something to me--

Do you want to expand?

When you get out of school, right, you have your basic needs; food and shelter and warmth, then you're left with this incredible amount of time and you kinda wonder what to do with it. I devote my time to what I find interesting and study up on it and learning about it, just learning the rest of your life. 'Cause I'm interested in philosophy and maybe I'll write books on philosophy, right. What I do with all this time once I'm out of school, once I'm done learning what they want me to learn is to continue learning the same way but what I want to learn. That's kind of what self-actualization means to me.

Well I say school is a weird place. In some ways you can look at school as a mini reference to your entire life and all the world or you can look at it as a complete waste of time. I'm not sure, sometimes it goes up on one end of the polarity and sometimes the other side. It can be wonderful,

you can learn so much from school and it can also be hell. Some people just come here and they look at it like that and it can be too much like work. But if you're doing things that you want to learn and things are interesting for you it can make all the difference.

Golden Cock Stands on One Leg while balancing lived time (temporality) as it relates our lifeworld to our past, present and future. Time speeds up when we are enjoying ourselves and are happy and can slow down when we are not, thus shaping our being in the world. Temporality was present through memories of the past, dreams of the future and the context of the present.

She remembered three things from grade two, hanging from the flexed arm hang so long the teacher made her stop, her Dad liked her teacher (he says because she wore mini-skirts) and when the new girl, N.T. came to the school, Heather got to show her around and walked her home to her house under her mini-mouse umbrella for a Kraft Dinner lunch. She still keeps contact with N.T. about three times a year; Christmas, N's birthday and N's son's birthday which is the same day as Heather's. N.T. and Heather used to play school in N's basement where they wrote their own play about a school teacher and her class. They performed in front of their school with two other friends. Coincidentally, N.T. is a teacher now too.

I remember Grade three I had this really, really good teacher. He was on an exchange from Britain. I don't know he just did different things; he was different from all the other teachers I had and, I don't know, he really got me going on school.

Grade three was spent out in a portable. Heather recalls learning to write that year and fondly remembers being allowed to keep a stray kitten in her desk for a day. The cheese and chocolate fondus were awesome. Memorizing & reciting a poem (about a caterpillar or something like that...) stands out in her mind and the dog book award at the end of the year from Mrs. F. who was really nice.

I remember in Toronto we had the same teacher for grades two and three. It was a good introduction to school. I enjoyed it there because she always did activities, the whole dinosaur thing. It was a lot of physical stuff. It was a cool two years.

Oh yea I remember my teacher from grade 4, no 5, she was a really young teacher and everyone loved her 'cause she was like so hyper and she was so nice that she wasn't like the older teachers. We played the ukulele and stuff and we just loved her. Everyone wanted to be in her class in grade 5 because she only taught grade 5.

In grade four she was in a grade 4/5 split class with an 'enriched' group of grade fours. She remembers learning about the provinces and being allowed to write on the board which was a prideful event at that time in her life. Grade five was in Mr. W.'s class where she recalls the desks being arranged in a circle and the big merit/demerit sheets on the wall but most of all she remembers memorizing a report on the sasquatch and being asked to say it in front of the grade six class, which she did. She can still feel her hands shaking under the desk but apparently no one else knew how nervous she was. She also remembers a very successful sport's day with 6 firsts and 1 second. D.T. won the shot put. Heather mentions that she has always really enjoyed Track & Field and even ended up coaching it later.

Both of your examples are from Elementary school. Is it different to connect to a teacher in high school as opposed to elementary school?

Yea it's like maybe when you get older you don't really talk to them.

Yea you already figured out if you like the teacher or not. It's different because like in elementary school you have the same teacher every single day.

Like our grade 6 teacher Mr.M. He retired two years ago and he'd been teaching for a long time. Like I knew someone 26 and he also taught her and he was like the best teacher we both ever had.

Grade six was in Mr. G.'s class. She has considerably fond memories of him. He'd call her up to check her math papers before marking the rest of the class. Heather recalls being somewhat awed by the fact that he even changed some of his answers to the ones she had. She remembers this year as the year when she really started helping her fellow students who had trouble with their work; she felt a lot of satisfaction when she helped them understand. Grade six was also the year when she broke the district long jump record. About 10 years later she ran into the former principal of the school, Mr. T. who said she still held the record (she has no idea if she still does). Disneyland fit in here somewhere. She is determined to go for another trip there soon.

The best teachers are the ones that somehow make the worst subjects seem interesting. Like Mr.M. made Social studies so interesting that I was just tuned in. He'd tell us jokes and stories.

No he didn't. He promised so much and did so little.

It's not what he promised, it's what he did.

It was boring.

He would tell us this story, half made up of facts, but he would make it more interesting; he just told us the

interesting aspects, no names except like Alexander the Great.

I remember in grade 7 our teacher for English was teaching us about the Romans and the Greeks and all that period of time. He always used to make it lively. He acted everything out, told a story, threw some stuff in that wasn't entirely true but it was interesting and we always remembered. He always made them funny and put in little jokes.

Grade seven was remembered by her for her favorite teacher, Mr. G. who is now a colleague in the same district as her. Mr. G. pushed her to work to the best of her abilities. N.T. didn't like him because he was 'too hard'. She still has her evolution of man report from grade seven and remembers writing some standardized test, panicking and starting to cry because she couldn't find a baseball in a picture of a store front in order to calculate the total cost of some items. Mr. G. was very kind about this and said all the right things to calm her down. This was also the year boys became more important and many a night went by with tears after her Dad proof read her book reports pushing her to perfection. It was also the eventful year when Heather and a group of friends got together on the Merry-go-round with a bottle of Vodka (she still keeps the lid) and M.B. got very sick (he brought the vodka). She and her friends propped him up on his doorstep, rang the bell and took off. Later on there was a phone call from M's parents at home, after which her Dad quietly came in her room to ask what M. had been into. She told him everything (she always did, and does). In housecoat and slippers she accompanied her Dad to M's. An ambulance took M. to the hospital to get his stomach pumped. Needless to say, M's Dad was very angry, but at home Heather's Dad kissed her on the forehead and said " We don't love you any less for it." It occurs to her that her Dad always knew the right things to say to make her think seriously about what she had done and learn from her mistakes.

Well I started off in good old regular [as opposed to a Flex system] being told to hold my pencil like this and don't hold it like this and then I went to Sundance and it kinda made school fun because there wasn't much emphasis put on, ah Math or anything like that (not to say that math isn't fun). Emphasis was just put more on being a person and stuff like

that. It kind of made school an experience that was more multidimensional. Then when you got right down to the grit of it like math and stuff you had a new perspective that you gained back then which let you ah--let you enjoy it more. When you go to school, well maybe not so much high-school, like elementary school and you're on the playground and you get in a fight, or any day there might be something. They had like playground monitors who helped you get through your problems. They didn't say well you go there and you go to the office, they'd be like a mediator and they'd help you work through your problem and come up with a solution and it was really neat cause the learning wasn't necessarily related to what the district would like us to learn but it was very important.

It's hard for her to separate out her Junior high-school years so she decided to lump the three years of memories together for this journey back through school day memories. The most prominent memories were student's council, science class, swim team, volleyball, track & field, Miss M.'s fitness class, boyfriends, hanging Mr. J. from the ceiling in her Uncle David's hang glider as a visual aid for an Outdoor Education presentation and watching him get awfully flushed when he couldn't get down (his whole bald head went red), and hiking the West Coast Trail. Her mom came on this (the biggest physical accomplishment she had ever attempted) and an interesting dynamic occurred where Heather took care of her mother. It was also the year she wore her outlandish leg warmers to school that her grandmother hand knit for her with all her wool scraps, something you might definitely see Pipi Longstockings wearing.

I find now that I'm in high-school and think back to all the rules and everything that are imposed on elementary school kids, I wonder how I put up with it. At Quadra for instance, if you're caught jay walking a mile away from the school you get a detention--excuse me--um when you're a mile away from the school it has nothing to do with your school life and I mean it's just kinda like where's the line drawn between your life and school?

I notice that in secondary school when you have grade 8 to 12 as opposed to just 11 and 12, there is a lot more leniency as to whether you have to show up for classes or not.

Her grade eleven and twelve years were spent at Belmont High School. She recalls Mr. A. (her Math teacher) getting her up to the board to teach the class several times. She enjoyed Mr. H.'s science class (mostly because of the people in it) and really liked being the Teacher Assistant for Muzz's P.E. class which included organizing all the intramural sports. Grade eleven was a tricky year as she looks back on it; work to rule by the teachers put sports on hold and Heather's Mom left her Dad that summer which came as a complete shock. Everyone had always said, "They are the perfect family".

As Heather puts it, her Mom went through some major changes, lost a lot of weight, started running, felt as though she'd 'missed' something in her life. Her Mom had always been caring and did special, thoughtful things like the time she brought a giant smurf home and put it in Heather's bed for her to find when she came home from babysitting one night with a note on its nose which said, "Hi". Well, at this time she says her Mom became quite selfish and just 'wanted out'. She came back once but was gone for good on Aug. 3, 1983, one of the only dates Heather remembers exactly. Her father was devastated. He had lived for his wife and family, was one of those rare men who still brought home roses and wrote poetry to his wife after 18 years of marriage. He spent a lot of time that year and even years to come overcoming the grief that this caused him. Heather's brother (4 years younger) was mainly left to his own devices for coping. He still blames a lot of life's pitfalls on his parents break-up. Heather took over a lot of shopping, cooking and cleaning (more than her usual chores) and helping her Dad cope. She can't remember too much of how grade twelve ended up even though she was the graduating class president. She does remember having to get up and speak in front of the school a number of times, having chicken pox in the summer after graduating and two male classmates seeing her at her grandparent's private wharf at Shawnigan Lake of all places in a bikini all spotted!

I just remember once in swimming, B group I couldn't go to the B.C. provincial. It was in July or something, because I was going away on a trip with my parents. I remember I was so into swimming then. I liked it so much I wanted to be there all the time. I just loved it so much! I was doing so

well in swimming, I just loved it so I came in every day up to the last moment before I had to leave. I was like, "O.K. I can make this morning practice." It's the most memorable because I was so excited about swimming. If I'm not excited it's not going to work but if I get excited it's like this feeling I get, it like makes everything clear which is just really, really exciting and makes you want to do it.

As *Golden Cock Stands on One Leg* the right knee is up and the left arm is down palm towards the ground (past), while the right arm is up, palm facing center (future) and here we are left to balance in the middle.

I want to go to University and I want to get a high paying job (laughs) and be rich. I don't know I've always wanted to be a dentist but I don't know about looking at people's mouths all day (laughter).

I used to think I was going to go to University, work in the Sciences, get a degree and go on to get married and have kids and work and do something really interesting like work in Biology but now I'm in Biology and I don't find it really interesting so now I don't really know what I want to do. I don't know if I really want to go to University or if--I sort of like--I want to go to university but I don't know what I would take if I went there. I don't know what courses I'm going to take next year because I don't want to make the mistake of missing something. Like what if I want to go into Sociology or Criminology and I find I don't like it. There aren't any courses that are offered like that here to see if I like it, so now I have no clue what I want to do and it's kinda hard.

She didn't travel or anything after high-school, she was helping her Dad out, working (for Safeway) and coaching track and field for Victoria Track & Field (where she met her future husband but not until 7 years later did they marry).

While the hands move, as if through clouds, the clouds are moving too. In each passing, what you are moving through has changed.

You both said you want to go to University even if you don't know what you want to do. Why?

I guess it's better than being a bum and having no job and being a waitress or something.

If you want to have a good job and get somewhere in life you're going to want to go to university or some postsecondary education.

I think I'm going to switch jobs and not do the same thing forever.

I guess for when your kids are going through school you don't want to seem dumb or anything. Like my grandma she was like living during the depression and when she looks at the stuff I'm doing she's like totally confused.

I think that like in CAPP we did all these tests to think about what kind of person we were, to lead us to jobs and stuff and I would always get like artistic and I really like art stuff but like doing pottery and art stuff is more like a hobby so I don't want to do it like a job so all those tests that supposedly tell us what we're going to do in the future are even more confusing.

Decide what you want and go for it. Think about what you want in the future, what your dreams are, what your goals are

and kind of mold your learning around so that you can get what you need. I mean if somebody was, umm, a fireman, I mean there are certain things in school that would be completely irrelevant to becoming a fireman and that time could be better spent learning relevant stuff to him.

What if a fireman decides later on that he doesn't like his job anymore and he wants to do something different but he's focused everything in his life on being a fireman?

I guess then he'd have to take a step backwards, but for the number of people who know what they want it would save time.

But most people don't know what they want.

The bright Way seems dim.
 The forward Way seems backward.
 The level Way seems bumpy.
 Superior integrity seems like a valley.
 The greatest whiteness seems grimy.
 Ample integrity seems insufficient.
 Robust integrity seems apathetic.
 Plain truth seems sullied.

The great square has no corners.
 The great vessel is never completed.
 The great note sounds muted.
 The great image has no form.

The Way is concealed and has no name.
 -Tao Te Ching

Move Hands Like Clouds occurs a multiple of times throughout the set. At each passing one improves on the reaching and stretching movement which rotates the spine and gives internal benefit.

Carry Tiger to the Mountain, in order for lived other (relationality) to create a relation through sharing of interpersonal space. Those that we come in contact with have the potential to shape our being as being part of our lifeworld. Connection to teachers,

connection to friends and personal responsibility have tended to encompass relationality in this thesis.

Nell Noddings states that,

Good teachers often wish there were times in the day to co-teach unconventional topics of great importance, and they even admit that their students are not getting what they need for full personal development. But they feel constrained by the requirements of a highly competitive world and the structures of schooling established by that world. [She asks,] is there a way out of this conflict? (Noddings, 1995, p.676)

I believe there is a way out of this conflict by modelling a process of caring (through a Taoist philosophy). By taking students through the process of caring and bringing them to a caring state, as what occurs in the classroom becomes an extension of ourselves in the world, then by the very experience of it they will be more likely to learn what it means to care. Building empathy and cooperation is part of the community building aspect of Flex as well as positive role modelling. A large portion of the program follows a self-directed model. Students learn to work with each other and help each other learn, in groups rather than sitting in the socially reduced setting of desks in rows, as recipients of primarily the teacher's knowledge. Multiple grade levels work together in the same rooms so that older students often help the younger ones. I have pets in my classroom too (a guinea pig, rabbit and newt). Time is flexible so that students can take care of them. Without any prompting from myself, students organized an evacuation procedure to look after the animals in the event of an emergency.

I like Nodding's idea of common themes through varied curricula (math, English etc.) on topics such as crime rates, but I want to get at a more wholistic approach in understanding such critical living skills like caring rather than just dividing it up into 'pockets'. These are so important they must pervade everything we do as teachers and learners.

Connection to Teachers and Friends

Well when I went to Oak Bay I had this different French teacher than I do now and so in grade 9 I was getting like P's--like 50% and then when I came to Reynold's and had a different teacher which I enjoyed, I'm now getting like 94% in French so I don't know, if you enjoy the teacher you get more interested and get more out of it.

It's also if a teacher enjoys what she is teaching--if they hate what they're teaching its like r-r-r-r-r and you sit there and they don't make you enjoy what you are learning but like we had Mr.A. and he loved Science and so he'd make you love Science and like Mr.E. just blabs on and on.

I believe I have physically felt spaces open up for myself and students, at times when I've really connected.

Taoist T'ai Chi is about opening up spaces, stretching the spinal column to allow free flow of nerve impulses and better functioning of the body.

This connection has been with regard to something 'living' within the curriculum I teach. For example, I was helping a student with some math word problems that she was having difficulty with. It became an emotional experience for her learning not to give up, not getting down on herself and giving herself the patience to see through problems. This hit home to the core of her being, not just math. The human connection at times like these literally sends chills down my spine and makes my face flush with the energy created. Talking about my thesis topic with my students creates a similar sensation and the energy gets me on a roll.

It's not just that, it's also just you and if you want to learn or not and then it doesn't really have to do with the teacher. If you don't like the teacher it doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to do bad it's just what

you put into it. Like if you don't like the teacher and you think, "O.K. I don't like the teacher so I'm going to do bad in this course." You can maybe change that around and say that, "Even though I don't like the teacher I still want to do good," and then put your mind to it.

You can tell sometimes too, the attitude some teachers seem to have about students, like they'll totally get mad at them in class and hassle them and with other students they'll like totally like them and praise them. There's this one student in my French class and he came from French Immersion so he knows quite a bit of French and then there's this girl and she's really smart, and I remember after a test one day the teacher didn't like the guy very much so she gave the girl extra work so she could start ahead but she didn't even bother telling the guy about it. She was sort of avoiding him. You know, he comes to class late and stuff like that so she doesn't like him very much, so she treats him differently from everyone else.

A lot of teachers do that. It happens in Chemistry. He just asks the front few, like the really smart people, and with the others he'll always taunt them about their answers, "Well you think so do you?"

There's just more one on one time in Flex. It's like a relationship I guess. You don't get that in regular like you do in Flex. The teachers can sit with people and teach just one person the whole unit but in [regular] the teacher is teaching the whole class so it's not the same.

One of the most positive aspects of this program is the one-on-one time I get with students who sit with me to go over things they are having difficulty with or errors on a test before they get a chance to write it a second time.

In regular you have to keep going on for two or three weeks because some people are behind other people but in Flex you can just learn, go to the teacher, like what we do with you, and learn an outline of the unit, learn it and go through it and if we need help, get help from other students or if you still don't understand go back to the teacher and just keep learning that way. I don't know, I find it better. We have more responsibility as well, to do all our work and get everything done.

I find it better with Flex teachers too because we get to call them by their first names.

R.M. popped in my room, boppy as usual (where does he get all that energy ?) and full of jokes. His birthday is at the end of the month. To K.M. (cerebral palsy student about grade one level in math) he says, "Better start saving your allowance for my birthday gift." K. turns to check this out with me (difficult for her to do, very poor motor control). I shake my head smiling, " He's just kidding." She visibly relaxes. She understood quite a complex thing, humor. "Nice going," I say to R., " a serious advertising campaign one month in advance of your birthday to increase the dividends, hey. " He laughs, "You better believe it!" He's quite a unique guy. The students love him and quite frankly, he loves them too.

We see the Flex teachers on a different level. In Physics class for example, we go and we sit and we sit and we sit and the teacher stands up there at the front. He never really gets to know you.

It's like that teacher up there, up at the board teaching. In Flex you know the person, you call them by their first names and you get to see them on the same level. You see them as a person not just like that person spewing out information at you.

It makes you feel more comfortable with the teacher.

You're on an equal level with them, they're not one up on you.

I don't know, when someone tells you, like this is Mr. R telling you this-this-this, he's like the high figure you know and some people don't respond to discipline and stuff but if it's someone like Bob, like Bob's on a more equal level. I don't know, I think it just seems by calling people by their first name it's like getting perks. It just seems more personal and they're getting to know you more and you're getting to know them more as a teacher.

Another thing that really 'works' is talking to students about life (real lives), letting them share some of your hopes and dreams and vice versa. Students get very interested when I talk to them about how I just bought my first house (a small one) and how we have to budget our money for it. They loved it when Dave brought me in roses! We became real people, real, positive role models. It's also very important to live what you preach and preach what you live. Again, teaching is part of your life and your life part of teaching, not separate.

Flex teachers know you more than just a student in their class 'cause a lot of people like in a regular class when you go there your teacher knows your name, you know the teacher's name and the teacher just stands there and teaches you and doesn't get to know you very well, you're just in the class, sitting there doing your work. In Flex the teacher gets to know you more and you get to know the teachers better and the students get to know the students better.

Another thing that 'works' is having students do most of the talking by asking questions that require more than a yes or no answer so they have to think.

Smiling is also wonderful. It lets students know you still like them even if you may be angry or disappointed with their behavior. Students can also tell if you genuinely care about them.

If you're in the same area all day with the same teachers you get to know them better than if you just sit in a classroom for an hour. I mean you could sit in the class for an hour and never know the teacher as well as one day just sitting in a Flex room.

The environment provides the occasion for a person's structure determined actions to bring forth a world of significance and the teacher is in the middle of the action in the classroom, not providing information to be matched nor simply observing and facilitating individual actions, but occasioning the world building actions and interactions of the students.⁷

In Flex you get to know your teachers more because you're with them every single year. Like W., I had her since grade 8 so she knew a lot about me. She knew about my swimming and everything and I knew a lot about her.

I think the Flex teachers get to know you a lot better than the elementary school teachers too. You can get more one-on-one time. I guess it depends if you're in the room with that teacher all the time. The teacher gets to know you a lot better over a number of years.

It is sad that the 'curriculum' often drives us away from what we instinctively know to be right but I do believe we can teach the 'ministry curriculum' and still do a great deal towards those very important, critical living skills, such as caring.

The emotion washed over me and I could feel my face becoming flushed...Please don't cry...I didn't want to cry...The salted tears welled up in the corners but I didn't outright cry. "I just don't want to see you get into trouble," I said, "You've got everything going for you; you're intelligent, attractive, talented," (and incredibly mature and together I thought). "Thank you for caring," she said as she gave me a hug, "I'm being really careful." "If you have to be so careful," I

⁷From a collection of non-published enactivist papers by Tom Kieren and the University of Alberta.

commented, "doesn't that tell you something about the relationship?" Her look was deep thought on that one. "Please take my phone number and call me if you need me." "Thank you." she said again as I busied myself cleaning something that didn't need it, to get my mind away from crying.

We can, as Noddings (1995) suggests, integrate topics from 'life' into our subject curriculum and include rich asides on the people and history of that curriculum. This can help to develop a human, living side to it. I believe, however, that it is through the actual interactions in the classroom that the critical living skills are learned. If students are involved in caring, respecting, and taking responsibility for themselves, others, guinea pigs and rabbits, equipment and knowledge, and if they constantly see these characteristics embodied in their teacher(s), they may be more apt to pick these things up. It is a whole way of being together in the school environment. Perhaps as Grumet (1988) suggests, the kind of space that will support the art of teaching, and that indeed, knowledge evolves in human relationships. As well, in her work, Grumet talks of Stephen Strasser's contention that, "What is fundamental is the interpersonal basis for human experience, and so the primary question is no longer how one comes to constitute a world but how a world evolves for us."

We need to be able to achieve the political function of the ministry curriculum as it is a construct of the real world we live in, but we also need to engage in our own lived experience. Grumet recapitulates this as follows,

Even in the most conventional scene of classroom practice we can find traces of transformative consciousness, no matter how masked in apparent compliance and convention. This perception invites us to refuse to run the classroom like a conveyance, designed to transport children from the private to the public world, but to make it instead a real space in the middle, where we can all stop and rest and work to find the political and epistemological forms that will mediate the oppositions of home and workplace. (1988, p.20)

A big part of that is one-on-one.

That's a good idea, that's a really good idea.

It's a good feeling when the students want to sit around me and work, so they can get help when they need it. It's also given me the opportunity to really observe how students reason out mathematics problems. I find it a unique challenge to try different approaches at explaining topics so different individuals can understand. I also find myself trying to ask good questions to stimulate them thinking in the right direction. I've been purposefully trying to avoid questions that have only a yes or no answer so that students need to process their thoughts more.

I wonder how all of this will reflect on how I raise my own children. I am really looking forward to having a baby (hard to think of much else) but I have been thinking about the best way to have the least disruption to my students and even have them share in the ups and downs of my pregnancy; teach about life by leading by example and having the classroom be the site of live experience.

Flex is interactive because you're able to work with your friends, so you can discuss subjects with them because they're your same age and part of your peer group and they are more on the same level.

Sometimes there are terms and a teacher will teach you one way and you don't understand that one way but then your peer can show you other ways so you can get help from them.

Responsibility

A person's own education is their own responsibility but can we help them to take that responsibility and use it wisely?

Flex teaches you to be independent; if you want to learn something it's on your head. It's not the teacher who's going to come and say, "O.K. now I'm going to teach you this." It's my responsibility to say, "Let's go do it." If you want to be responsible in the outside world (outside school), we know

that it's in our hands. It's not like anyone else is going to kick our butts, we've got to do it ourselves. I think Flex helps us because we know what we have to do and we're not getting behind like in a regular class like, in Chemistry we get so far behind.

Yea, also Flex helps you be more responsible with your work and stuff so it helps outside of school if you are responsible with your actions and what you do. So if you're not with your parents all the time like when we go away for [swim] meets for two weeks to some foreign country we have to be responsible enough to know what to do and I think school helps us be more responsible and know guidelines.

I have to keep reminding myself that I don't have to do all the work; in fact it's best if I don't. My role as I see it is to set up the best potential for positive learning experiences and to be a positive role model. When students have a greater responsibility for their own learning it's interesting how much more often students seek your help, and the time is usually there in Flex to meaningfully look at problems together.

You can force someone to sit in a class but you can't force someone to pass the class. You can't force someone to learn anything. There is a lot that the teacher has to do with the student's learning but if I'm sitting in a class and I don't want to learn something I won't learn anything.

Pivot on foot with arms held out bent at the elbow holding (a tiger) in the crooks of your arms. Square the hips and shift weight forward as the *Tiger is Carried to the Mountain*. Push right hand forward and lift hand back along leg as Tiger is pushed off and set free.

There's some balance there but if they're not willing to learn you have to leave the responsibility to them. You

can't make them learn. Maybe you can make them write but you can't make them think. You can't make them productive unless they want to be.

Do you think people should be provided guidance in that regard or just left to figure out on their own and sink or swim?

Well especially in grade 11 or 12 if you're skipping and you're failing, that's your fault. I mean you don't legally have to be there, they can just kick you out. If you fail, you fail, that's it. If you want to learn you'll be there.

Or you won't but you can still pass, and sometimes if you want to learn and you can get by without being there all the time...Sometimes you want to just leave and go downtown and do whatever then you can do that but--

Before this year (well I still do it but not as much) I totally took on the responsibility of learning from my students. I would push them through the course trying to 'make' everyone be successful. I became very upset if students didn't do very well. Rather than me being there as a resource to help them the best I can with them taking responsibility for their own learning, I was doing it all for them basically. For me, this program has the flexibility to make it easier for me to begin to hand over more of the responsibility to the students. I have a long way to go mind you.

The other component with Taoist philosophy seems to fit well too, seeing how one of the major tenants of the philosophy is personal responsibility. This is of prime importance to the Flex program and its self-directed format. Students have to finish all work to a high standard before moving on. They seem to do good work more

for the pride of quality they produce rather than for 'the marks'. This is neat. The work that has been handed in so far has been very good.

Respect for the Way and esteem for integrity
are by no means conferred upon them
but always occur naturally.

The Way gives birth to them, nurtures them, rears them,
follows them, shelters them, toughens them, sustains them,
protects them,

It gives birth but does not possess,
acts but does not presume,
rears but does not control.

This is what is called "mysterious integrity"

-Tao Te Ching

The thing is lots of times, the students, they look at the teacher as a god who knows everything and think, "If I just do what the teacher tells me I can make it through." That's not true, you're responsible for getting your act together.

And teachers can't cram it down our throats. You can't really teach us effectively unless we want to learn.

But how can you tell? How can you tell if somebody can handle that? You can say, "O.K. sure you can get into it" and then you can find out that they screwed themselves over. Because at some stage we're still kids, you have to kind of say sometimes, their words don't mean what they're actually saying and you have to take your--ahh, ahh like guardian aspect in that somehow. You also have to let us--you have to realize that we are getting our own reasoning capacity that we sometimes figure it out for ourselves.

And sometimes when we don't it's not a bad thing. Mistakes are excellent. Mistakes are lessons so when we screw up, try to make it a positive experience.

As an educator I find myself even more trapped than I was as a student (even though I am still a student). I'm still always learning... When I'm just dealing with myself as a student, and my own learning, I can do whatever I want going beyond the bounds of the system or re-make the system. If I decide I don't want to do something and I weigh the consequences, I can make my own choices. As an educator that is more difficult because my decisions may hold consequences for other people. For example, if I decide for a particular piece of the curriculum it would be more worthwhile if we spent our time questioning our ideas on such-in-such, then I think that there could be possible ramifications which could start to snowball. For some students it might be fine because they would learn what they need to and figure it out when they needed to down the road anyway, but for some students if they go on and don't have the math foundations necessary to progress, and the next teacher expects them to know curricular details, they may not do very well... and there are government exams in grade 12 allowing students to get their 'ticket' to postsecondary education. I have a hard time justifying not preparing them for that, so consequently I try to do both by creating a space within the system for movements in between. So things that I do can effect others, sure they have ultimate responsibility for their own learning, but things I do can have an effect.

Who's responsibility is it anyway? I don't think it's black and white it's more like the multifacets of a diamond.

MOVEMENT FIVE

TURN AROUND TO SWEEP LOTUS
Taking Time to Hear Words of Learning

轉身擺蓮

"It takes a person of virtue to hear words of virtue.
It takes a person of strength to hear words of strength.
It takes a person of learning to hear words of learning."
-Ming-Dao, 1996 p.42

Whatever approach we seek to develop, it always needs to be understood as an answer to the question of how an educator stands in life, how an educator needs to think about children, how an educator observes, listens, and relates to children, how an educator practices a form of speaking and writing that is pedagogically contagious. (van Manen, 1992, p. 151)

It seemed like a very small, if not insignificant orchestra pit, but it might well have been monumental for all she could do to enter its musical sphere of influence. The other instruments seemed a lot shinier and larger. They were also older, been around longer and/or made a lot more noise (they were louder anyway). Those were some of the excuses the flute (feeling quite small) gave herself, for not adding her tune to the rest of the music. The others were just warming up; they weren't necessarily on key but they played so they could be heard. Some of the time the flute didn't agree with the music the others were playing but she didn't yet feel like playing her own tune all by herself. On the occasion when she did decide to pipe up it ended up being so quiet that the rest basically carried on without her anyway. She couldn't decide whether or not this really bothered her and whether or not she just wanted to be quiet and listen to the sounds of the others (it didn't quite sound like music to her). Every time she thought of a few notes that might go with the others, and had finally decided to play them, it was too late she had missed the entry beat. It wasn't like this with other bands she tried to play with. She often put together elaborate pieces and played them very well at the appropriate times. Was it the instruments she was playing with, the songs being played, where they were being played or a combination. Why should everything change? What caused it and how did she really feel about it?

At first she was really upset and questioned her capability as a musical instrument and wished she could be another instrument which would have a greater degree of success in those situations but the more she thought about it and consulted those that were close to her she realized that she couldn't change who she was; she would always be a flute and there were people who loved her the way she was and people who admired the music she did produce, but she still felt it was important to play difficult pieces, new pieces that might not be familiar. At the same time she felt she should be satisfied with her silences; they allowed her to hear the music of the others more closely and this alone may be very valuable to her growth as the musical instrument she was. She decided to enjoy listening when she felt she didn't have any specific notes to accentuate the music being played and from listening try to learn variations in accompaniment so that she might be able to contribute significantly, more often. At other times she would enjoy simply playing for

herself. She knew that no matter what or when she played she would do a better job if she was relaxed so she resolved to do her best, rejoice in her successes, work to improve her repertoire and beyond all else just enjoy the music.

The idea of existence leads us to assume that at any point in time we will be living in a 'somewhere' and by a means of 'somehow', and in our world, change is one of the only constants. One must take the time to listen in order to hear, and just because one hears words of wisdom does not mean that one is instantly transformed; positive change towards growth requires active participation in the experience as well as continual reflection of it. One must open one's ears to an array of music; one's past, one's 'calling' to teaching, others with you in the space in between...

In the T'ai Chi move, Turn Around to Sweep Lotus, one has an opportunity to turn around and look behind oneself. It is also the only move which makes an audible noise...

After re-reading all of what was written of her recollections, Heather tried to pick out things that may have most seriously influenced the way she is as a teacher. Her life growing up was most definitely foundational to who she is, why she teaches, how she teaches and what she might want to do in the future.

While turning your hips and shoulders to the right, shift your weight to the right foot, pivoting your left foot on the heel until your feet are in a 'pigeon-toed' position.

She decided that she would have to say the single most important influence in her life would be her Dad. The way he responded to her problems, set very high expectations for her and engaged her in discovery and learning...she stops here to recall a few more memories; every year when she was growing up, Heather and her family would spend part of the summer camping at Little Qualicum Falls where she and her Dad would always attend the nature walks with the park naturalist (another career Heather has considered) to learn about the forest life. Heather's Dad also took her on Saturday field trips with his science class when she was about seven (she became the class mascot she remembers

fondly). Heather's Dad's brother (her Uncle John)--the most patient man there is according to Heather, also taught her many things at an early age, such as telling time and long square roots. Both her Dad and Uncle are teachers (they both still argue about who saw her first when she was born too). Apparently a couple of generations ago a Shaw relative started a one room school house in Swan River Manitoba... Perhaps teaching runs in the family blood.

Push both palms down as you turn your hips and shoulders to the right and step 'Pa Kua' with the right foot.

Heather noticed something else about her memories through school days; they didn't really have anything to do with the content of courses but rather she remembered more clearly feelings, the types of teachers she had, relationships that formed, activities and social experiences. All of these experiences seemed to provide her with the greatest learning opportunities if we agree that memory will serve us better, the more significant the learning experience. She also feels that home life is paramount to her life at school and this alone has had a profound impact on the way she lives her life. As a teacher she explains that she attempts to focus on the process of learning and being a caring teacher who tries to find out about her students and help them along in the brief time that she is part of their lives. She also feels it's important to recognize the social experience of school as being one of the most critical functions and therefore, she works hard to foster positive values in her students and respect for each other in how they handle their interpersonal relationships.

Continue turning to the right and step with the left foot so that the feet are in the 'pigeon-toed' position again.

It is her opinion that for teachers there is a lot they cannot do in the development of a child (the most important place is the home) but there are some things they can do. To her, some is better than none. What she confides she is working on now is the battle of how much of herself to put into her teaching and how much she should keep for herself and her 'life outside being a teacher'. But are the two separable, she muses quietly? This is a central part of a personal inquiry of hers. She realizes it isn't on her shoulders

(although they are broad) to 'save' her students and she can't do everything. The issue of who's responsible, is a big one...She thinks change is important. Teaching is a very demanding job she confirms. It can consume people (or their spirit anyway), but with the right attitude it can also be very rejuvenating. She thinks it is important for teachers to do other things throughout their lives so they don't become consumed. Heather wants to try different things but she feels slightly guilty because she was always told to finish what she starts (even the cream of asparagus on toast many years ago). The big thing she needs to realize, though, she explains, is you can never 'finish' a teaching job (or any other life pursuit for that matter). Life is just one day at a time and the best you can do is be happy and try to do some good each day.

Stand on left leg and pull arms to right. Straighten the right leg in front of you in a quick kicking motion as you sweep the arms from right to left, hitting your foot at the tip of the kick (soft slapping sound)...and continuing to the left, ending in a cross hands position.

We can all be found within our lived experiences. We are a part of them as they collectively contribute to who we are. Within the text representation (a weaving of many voices) of a lived experience between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived, I have the opportunity to find meaning in teaching/learning, living reflectively in the space created, to hear student voices as well as my own and listen to the connections and disconnections experienced through lived space, lived time, lived body and lived other.

The teacher, if indeed wise,
does not bid you to enter
the house of their wisdom,
but leads you to the
threshold of your own mind.
-Kahlil Gibran

In T'ai Chi, there is movement. One moves back and forth across the floor. Moves are repeated throughout each set but revisited differently each time.

"What are you learning in school?"

"Why do you think they picked the [curriculum] they did?"

"Does it matter what they pick?"

"Is school a flexible system?"

"Is school important?"

"What are the cogs doing?"

"Why?"

"Should school work by a system?"

"Is change needed in the school system?"

"Can you do anything with this system?"

"What could the experience be like?"

"Can we make space within it all for the individual?"

"Should there be more choice?"

"Why?"

"What's at the end of the tunnel?"

"Is there a light at the end of the tunnel?"

"Why?"

"Do you enjoy learning?"

"Shouldn't education be freeing at all times?"

"A nurturer of lived moments;

isn't that what life and living are all about?"

"Isn't that what teaching is all about?"

"Is caring important?"

"Is school different in elementary school?"

"Are there ways to engage in learning to be more connected?"

"Where is student responsibility?"

"Where is teacher responsibility?"

"Who's responsibility is it anyway?"

"Why?"

"Is the Why inherent?"

"Does the answer matter?"

"The exploration does..."

The Greek philosopher, Socrates, knew that asking questions was the most effective way to teach, and learn.

As a teacher one has the opportunity to learn about oneself and about what it means to teach through the reflections passed back to them from their students...a dance of push hands.

...an ancient way of honouring the wisdom of joyful cooperation and synergy in human relationships...a dance of blending together in circular patterns as the hands surround the empty space between the two...The wisdom is in the empty space...Without this emptiness between [teacher] and [learner] there is no sharing. (Huang and Lynch, 1996, p. 5)

Gathering wisdom (meaning) from the empty space is a lifelong process. At any given time one can collect pieces which are only part of a greater whole. The T'ai Chi dance continues without beginning or end. In *Turning Around to Sweep Lotus* the hands sweep back and forth from left to right and back again. This creates positive movement in the spine which benefits internally.

Teaching, being a teacher, is part of who one is, it is not a separated profession from the rest of one's life.

The effectiveness of teaching may have more to do with the being of teacher--who the teacher is...Isness of teaching.
-Ted Aoki

Learning, being a learner is part of who one
is, it is not a separated activity from
the rest of one's life.

In our society there exist systems.

The Education System is highly
structured but within structure lies the possibility for
individual flexibility (in between).

Connectedness in education is largely due to
the personal relationships formed (in between)
rather than the curriculum itself.

Personal choice affords individuals the opportunity
to set goals and create an environment to
promote the attainment of the goals and then
let them happen.

Individuals must be given
the responsibility for their own lives.

This can be a shared responsibility
while they are gaining their own skills to do
so.

You cannot force things to happen.

You must provide opportunities (ask Why?)
and then let them happen--let loose...

Relax and BE who you are.

It is important to continuously
reflect in order to
grow.

MOVEMENT SIX

WHITE STORK SPREADS WINGS
Learning Along the 'WAY'

白鶴亮翅

The Way is empty,
yet never refills with use,
Bottomless it is,
like the forefathers of myriad creatures.
It files away sharp points,
unravels tangles,
diffuses light,
mingles with the dust.
Submerged it lies,
seeming barely to subsist.
I know not whose child it is,
only that it resembles the
predecessor of God.
-Tao Te Ching (Lau Tzu)

According to Tao, all existence is circular, Yin-Yang. There is balance in the blending of opposites such as beginning and end. For me, the fundamental understanding I have gained through this reflective process, above all others, is how to walk along a path towards inner peace as one who teaches, while existing in the space between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived; move from making learning happen to letting learning happen for both myself and my students. To do so means to continuously reflect on my life and teaching as a part of it, and to grow and learn from others (who have possibly been this Way before), to discover or make places within 'the system' like the Flexible Studies program which enable flexibility and choice 'in between', and sharing responsibility for learning with students. Encompassing all of these means to maintain a route towards becoming a Taoist Sage, thus developing internal wisdom and external leadership in all these matters of life as one who teaches. I am cross-legged under a tree passing on wisdom as one who has gone before but who is very much living in the now, continuing to learn myself.

The Chinese symbol for bamboo is used as a metaphor for a sage (Huang and Lynch, 1996). It is described in terms of a blending of opposites following the Yin-Yang principle: Flexibility and Strength; Powerful and Delicate; Scholarly and Humble; Heart and Mind. The word *hsing* means heart, mind, consciousness and the life center. The heartmind of bamboo is in the hollow emptiness.

Learning from others (who have possibly been this Way before)

When all we have to walk is the lifelong way, we need some sense of where we are and how far we have gone. We need some sense if others have been this way before. We need to know when we are leaving one stage and entering another.

This is not always easy. It is not always perfect. But it is important to note certain milestones:

When you think of others before yourself, that is Tao.

When you discipline yourself, that is Tao.

When you feel an activity doing itself rather than your doing it, that is Tao.

When you are aware of what to do spontaneously, that is Tao.
 When you can take responsibility for what you do, that is Tao.
 When you cultivate different skills with complete attention, that is Tao.
 When you enter into lucid stillness, that is Tao.
 When you are better than you worries, that is Tao.
 When you can control your health, that is Tao.
 When you can combine mind and action, that is Tao.
 When you can be like water, that is Tao.
 When you can be as illuminating as fire, that is Tao.
 When you can be as sharp as metal, that is Tao.
 When you can be as piercing as wood, that is Tao.
 When you can be as abundant as earth, that is Tao.

And when you can make yourself like a rock at will, that is Tao.
 (Ming-Dao, 1996, p. 89)

Does everyone go through this? Is it like a conveyor belt of stages and I am just finally hitting one that others before me have been past? Milestones. Are certain points real transformations? I think back to talking with Antoinette regarding my thesis and remarking that I could do it on a number of things that are important to me but that nothing 'life defying' has occurred in my life to impassion me to a particular path of inquiry. This was very disappointing to me, as Antoinette said it was so much more meaningful to be a pebble in the center of the mountain rather than just added to the exterior. In the center you have the potential to move the mountain. Hmm, in the space between, we have the potential for movement(s) as well.

To my surprise, the inquiry itself has become a major catalyst for a considerable transformation in my life, one I am most impassioned to. I ask myself: Did Antoinette know? Does it happen to everyone? Was it just a matter of time? In reading an article by Maxine Greene (1987, p.4-14) I found it remarkable how much I connected with what she was saying about her own progress through life and as a teacher. She describes changing from the concept of privileged knowledge and depositing it into student's as if they were piggy banks, to finally using teaching to open up spaces by revealing her own consciousness of contradiction, her ambivalence with regard to her students' freedom and ambivalence with regard to her own. These inquiries are much like my own.

I absorbed the idea that the point of subject matter and all that nutritional material was actually to provoke persons to pose their own questions, to begin their own inquiries, to go in quest of the kinds of meanings that would pattern their experiences and help them make sense of the actualities of their own lives... I did not have to live a compartmentalized life, as if my mind were some kind of department store...the whole idea of project and praxis- of choosing oneself in one's 'dreadful freedom' by means of a life project, and by engaging in reflective practice always with the intent to go beyond, to reach towards imagined possibility. (Greene, 1987, p.10,11)

I am now entertaining the idea that our lives cannot be compartmentalized into life and work, school and life. Our lives go on no matter where we are as teacher or learner (as if the two can be separated) and we cannot divide them. Within the context of a school, space can be created between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived, to question, to inquire, to reflect on our lives within subject inquiry to move forward and grow.

I come back to asking myself if we are all on similar paths, myself following after Maxine and Antoinette, my students following after me, or is it multiple paths but in the same direction like in T'ai Chi? We all start off doing the same thing, facing the same direction and end up doing the same thing, facing the same direction from birth to death, but what happens in between, although 'following the person in front of you', has each person's nuances added to the moves.

Finding a place within the system to create a flexible space in between to share responsibility

The FIRE of the mighty river Yang
burns upward and outward.
the WATER of the quiet valley Yin
flows downward and inward.
And through their harmonious union,
the CHI begins to move and flourish.
And the *Great Ultimate* --TAI CHI is born.
-Huang and Lynch (1995)

Central to the teacher/learner relationship (which is a yin yang relationship itself, not polar), is finding a balance of responsibility for what occurs 'in between' (let's say, in a classroom). This is related to the Taoist *Wu Dao* dance where each member of the learning relationship is involved with giving (fire) and receiving (water) (Huang and Lynch, 1995). A dancing variation of the Yin Yang symbol shows the customary swirls circling around an empty center. The center has been said to represent the ultimate vacuum containing the wisdom of life. By circling around the middle (the Heartmind mentioned earlier), we can look into the wisdom of all things. This requires the development of *Te*, which in turn requires a 'letting go' of the need to 'know all'.

By acknowledging the emptiness created by not knowing all, a space is created for the teacher/learner relationship to foster deep understanding and openness to vast growth and change with a balance of responsibility. If a teacher takes on too much of the responsibility the balance is lost. Similarly, the learner must take his share. Balance is not necessarily achieved with a 50-50 split. As a painting shows balance through a multitude of shapes, positioning, shadows and colours, so to is the balance of responsibility multifaceted. As well, the balance to be achieved with each relationship is unique. By opening spaces, however, the water will flow in to fill the space.

The important factor is to open the space. To open spaces, one must awaken their senses of perception to feel the shifting balance as if on a teeter-totter. Even with one's eyes closed, one has a 'feeling' of balance at the appropriate time. It is similar with the 'feeling' of balance sensed between shared responsibility in the teacher/learner relationship.

Why is it that I have come to a point where I am the happiest, most peaceful and healthy in my career as a teacher? Is it just that I am becoming more mature as a person and able to deal with the stressors better; take them in stride? Is it because I've had enough years now teaching and have gathered so many resources that I am no longer spending hours and hours every evening creating my own things? Is it because the Flex Studies program is flexible; I don't have to stand up in front of a class preaching all day but can sit with students and help them learn, with them taking ultimate responsibility for their own learning, we've created a balance? Is it because I'm now married and the rest of my life is more secure and enjoyable and I am thinking about having it be more well-rounded rather than driving myself all in one direction? Is it because I am now in a masters program which has caused me to undergo significant growth and reflective thinking? Or is it a combination of everything? Perhaps this thesis was the catalyst needed to shift everything into place so that it could be felt. I don't know if there is any way that I can definitively answer these questions but the inquiry into them has unveiled sufficient meaning for continued inquiry and further growth.

The happiest heart that ever beat
 Was in some quiet breast
 That found the common daylight sweet,
 And left to Heaven the rest.

-John Vance Cheney

The Flex program seems to fit me like a glove. Just as students have varying learning styles so do teachers have varying teaching styles, not too surprising considering their powerful link to one another and to human nature none the less. The program fits my philosophy of education and allows me to be who I am as a teacher. I do not have to take on any false roles and I am better able to 'hand over' responsibility for learning to individual students. I'm afforded a greater opportunity to open up spaces...

The Flexible Studies Program enabled the internal transforming that I was in the midst of to open up to living it externally. I had the flexibility to really BE who I was and engage in teaching/learning practices that were entirely positive.

Another good day! Am I waiting for a bad day? I held workshops today on Fibonacci numbers for grade 8's in order to help them appreciate the creation of mathematics by real people as a human endeavor. I love having the flexibility to be able to do things like that so effortlessly.

The softest thing under heaven
 gallops triumphantly over
 The hardest thing under heaven.

Nonbeing penetrates nonspace.
 Hence,
 I know the advantages of nonaction.

-Tao Te Ching

I was actually able to begin to let learning happen rather than make it happen.

Teaching is even more difficult than learning...Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn... If the relation between the teacher is genuine....there is never a place in it for the authority of the knower-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official...It...is an exalted matter...to become a teacher... which is something else entirely than becoming a famous professor... We must keep our eyes fixed firmly on the true relation between teacher and taught.. (Heidegger, 1968, p15-16)

Aiming to be a Taoist Sage

Health, happiness and being at peace with oneself and one's surroundings are very important aspects of anyone's life. As expressed by Thich Nhat Hanh (1991), the way in which we embody these things is through internal transformation. They are not external or to be sought after or attained.

Peace is every step.
The shining red sun is my heart.
Each flower smiles with me.
How green, how fresh all that grows.
How cool the wind blows.
Peace is every step.
It turns the endless path to joy. (p.ix)

A lot can be learned through Eastern thought and Philosophy. In the West we tend to engage in separation. As Jerry Dalton's research describes,

In the West an historical event--Adam's fall--separated us from the grace of a separate God and only a historical event--the end of time--will bring us back into grace with a still separate God. In the East reunification with the fragmented divine oneness requires only self-examination and an altering of our psychological orientation. The Western view is historical, ethical, and externally directed towards another life in another realm. The Eastern view is metaphysical, poetic, and internally directed toward a correct and egoless life in this realm. (Dalton, 1994, p. ix)

Keeping oneself connected to everything one does, through who one is, enables a peaceful living within the space in between, a place without definite boundaries, a place for

movements which form a unique dance. One could call it a T'ai Chi dance. There are similarities but the set is different for each person and is continuously changing as experience is gained and one pays attention to the movements: *Creeping Low like a Snake; Golden Cock Stands on One Leg; Step up and Grasp Birds Tail and Carry Tiger to the Mountain...* A wise teacher of mine⁸ likened how one pays attention to these movements to jumping into a sea, the one called Life. After learning some valuable strokes that enable you to move around quite proficiently you now want to savor the water, the feeling of it on your body, the buoyancy it gives you, the coolness, the splashes that you can make with it, the opportunity it gives you to teach other people to swim, the fact that you can hold onto another and that person can hold you, without the full weight of a body. It is exciting learning how to float...just floating...slowing down enough, letting go enough to be able to notice the texture of the water, who is in it with you, where they are, what you can see lying on your back, what you can hear with your head partially submerged. It requires an inner calmness, because it may feel as though you're going to sink, or even get seasick at times; it can be a very vulnerable position. This a critical component in the search for a Way, in teaching.

At the Gorge of Lu, the great waterfall plunges for thousands of feet, its spray visible for miles. In the churning waters below, no living creature can be seen.

One day, K'ung Fu-tse was standing at a distance from the pool's edge, when he saw an old man being tossed about in the turbulent water. He called to his disciples, and together they ran to rescue the victim. But by the time they reached the water, the old man had climbed out onto the bank and was walking along, singing to himself.

K'ung Fu-tse hurried up to him. "You would have to be a ghost to survive that," he said, "but you seem to be a man, instead. What secret power do you have ?

⁸from comments to journal by Antoinette Oberg.

"Nothing special," the old man replied. "I began to learn while very young, and grew up practicing it. Now I am certain of success. I go down with the water and come up with the water. I follow it and forget myself. I survive because I don't struggle against the water's superior power. That's all."
 -(a story from the writings of Chuang-tse)

When we learn to work with our own Inner Nature, and with the natural laws operating around us, we reach the level of *Wu Wei* .

This Way of learning is congruent with understanding and enjoying the sensations of learning [mathematics] together (myself with my students); the pride of creating our own class book, the excitement of making connections with mathematics; to music, to nature, to history..., the determination in conquering and understanding a difficult concept, the elation in manipulating symbols to a final coherent solution, the comfort in discovering that mathematics is a part of our world, we create it as it creates us, the peace found in continuously becoming, and approaching wisdom, the clarity of organizing a body of knowledge to understand, the freedom achieved through shared responsibility of learning and the reality of coming to understand where we are in the space between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived and how best we can live there.

There should be no hidden agenda. Students and teacher, alike, create the curriculum together and change, together, through their live(d) experience of it.

Both myself and my students are within our own journeys, which have crossed paths at this particular time to join in a T'ai Chi set and influence each others' movements. T'ai Chi sets have no end... practice is good but never forced and personal responsibility is developed. The movements are an expression of a lived experience in the space between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived. They tell my story in the search for the 'Way' in teaching and learning, being in tune with my own inner nature and the natural laws operating around me and learning along the 'Way', continuously learning how to go down and up with the water. Special insights pop up along the way to help make a movement more clear, easier to do, less of a strain, like BEing like POOH.

Today when I was teaching some grade elevens some math concepts I related everything we were doing as a Way of life and an approach to 'things'--any thing(s). Practice is good; work from the inside out (brackets in math congruent to inner self...get that in order before doing things externally); bottom up (build foundations); get centered (come to an equilibrium before moving on to the next)...

How one understands something else helps one understand themselves. What career other than teaching affords one the opportunity of such continued personal growth? To teach is to learn; to be able to learn is to be able to grow...

Making Learning Happen to Letting Learning Happen

This thesis is about the transition from making learning happen to letting learning happen, in a space between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived. I say 'a' space here because there could be many spaces which do this. It is important to find the right space for each individual, part of that being an internal finding. It does not preclude, however, setting up environments, and developing philosophies and ways of BEing which have potential to 'let' positive things happen. It is important to consider that this is not, can not, be a prescription. It is a developmental and reflective process to be experienced by each individual--a learning along their Way. Some things are clear to me. There is meaning to be found in the lived experiences of teachers and students. By really listening to the connections and disconnections experienced through lived space, lived body, lived time and lived other, learning can occur. It is important to have some catalyst which promotes engaging in reflection and to have your senses activated in readiness for 'awareness moments' of the Way when it presents itself. There is no end. There is no ultimate Way; it changes and fluctuates and is different for each individual.

The way is empty,
yet never refills with use,
Bottomless it is,
like the forefather of myriad creatures.
It files away sharp points,
unravels tangles,
diffuses light,
mingles with the dust.
Submerged it lies,
seeming barely to subsist.
I know not whose child it is,
only that it resembles the
predecessor of God.

-Tao Te Ching

POSTSCRIPT

Hobbes: Why are you digging a hole?
Calvin: I'm looking for buried treasure.
Hobbes: What have you found?
Calvin: A few dirty rocks, a weird root and some
 disgusting grubs.
Hobbes: On your first try?
Calvin: There's Treasure Everywhere!

-Bill Waterson, (1996)

How nebulous and blurred!
Yet within it there are images.
How blurred and nebulous!
Yet within it there are objects.
How cavernous and dark!
Yet within it there is an essence.
Its essence is quite real;
Within it there are tokens.

-Tao Te Ching

My masters program began the Summer of 1994. It is coming to a close this Summer, 1996, two years later. When I began I was not very happy teaching in the school system after completing a year with a difficult teaching assignment in a 'regularly' structured classroom arrangement and I was annoyed at my inability to relax and enjoy not actively 'doing' something. As you have now read, it was a struggle and was frustrating and I was trying too hard. I was trying to produce entirely new programs to meet the diverse needs of all my students without a structure to back me up. I was seriously thinking of alternate career options. Through my reflections and really thinking about my life and my teaching practices, who I am as a person who teaches, I came to an inner state of equilibrium which allowed me to deal better with the frustrations and to avoid building them myself. I really started to look at what goes on in 'that space' between the 'curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived' and hence *Fair Lady Worked Shuttles*. I began learning how to listen to students and hear how they lived in that space as well. The real transformation occurred when I moved schools and started to teach in a singularly unique program to the district, the Flexible Studies Program, which allowed me the flexibility to start to live in the space the way I felt to be right.

Taoism is an Eastern Philosophy that has affected a subtle manifestation of transcending peacefulness and mindfulness for me. Ultimately I would endeavor to 'engage in becoming' a Taoist sage, one who seeks internal wisdom and external leadership. This altered living framework, along with returning to university, has been part of an internal transformation in my life and teaching as an essence of my life; it seems to be taking me on a path leading toward the development of internal wisdom. My aim is to use such wisdom in my teaching, leading by example and bringing my students along similar pathways I have travelled to an 'internal location' where one lives happily, healthily and peacefully and engages in learning as an enjoyable experience for personal growth; letting learning happen rather than trying to make learning happen.

There were times when I felt as though I should have waited ten more years to do my masters degree. I considered that I'd be so much more experienced and my personal experience would be much richer. I know that this thesis is entirely different from what it would be in ten years and somewhat different than it would be two weeks from now, but no less valuable. It is a documentation of a lived experience and the meanings found there at a particular time specific to that lived experience. I continue to learn. This thesis does not end, rather it is a new beginning, because now I continue to learn along the Way.

Most recently, I have moved from trying to change myself and my natural tendencies to be 'busy' (and perhaps overly productive and organized), to finding peace in accepting the 'way that I am', as well as be mindful of the 'way that I am' so that I might continue to engage in opportunities for personal and professional growth and allow my own personal learning to happen without force.

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Title of Thesis:

TAO TE (tea)CHING: LEARNING ALONG THE 'WAY'

Author



Heather D. Coey
Sept. 6, 1996

