

**OPENING THE DOORS TO DREAMLAND:  
DEVELOPING LITERACY AND ENGAGEMENT  
THROUGH IMAGINATIVE EDUCATION**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis is a theoretical as well as practical investigation and application of Kieran Egan's ideas of imaginative education to the teaching of history in two grade six classrooms. Two central questions underlie the study: do the techniques of imaginative education enhance student engagement with the curricular content; and do the techniques of imaginative education help students to develop their literacy in the context of the study of history?

In order to address these questions, two research studies employing the techniques of imaginative education were conducted at an elementary school which was part of the LUCID project (Learning for Understanding through Culturally Inclusive Imaginative Development). Part One of the thesis examines the theoretical framework of imaginative education in order to give support to the concepts involved. Chapter One discusses the current state of literacy research, showing how it has developed from a cognitive to a sociocultural approach, an approach consistent with Egan's work. Chapter Two investigates the philosophical and historical background to the concept of the imagination, showing how the concept itself has always been problematic but arguing that it is essential for any fully-informed educational praxis. Chapter Three discusses the historical transition from oral to literate cultures and delineates the kinds of cognitive tools that students have available as they enter the world of the classroom on their voyage to becoming literate members of society. Chapter Four specifically discusses the work of Kieran Egan, attempting to describe the theoretical underpinnings of his imaginative approach to education, and examining the cognitive tools for the development of literacy.

Part Two examines the application of these ideas in two grade six classrooms. Chapter Five discusses the methodology of the study itself. Chapter Six examines how the use of imaginative education affects the literacy of students in a different manner than typical methodologies, leading to greater engagement with the material being studied. Chapter Seven examines the results of a follow up study with a

different group of students, examining a broader range of cognitive tools, while providing some triangulation with the first study.

**KEYWORDS**

Literacy, narrative, engagement, imagination, cognitive tools, integrated curriculum, aboriginal education

This work is dedicated to my mother and father, without whom it would not have been possible, and to my wife June and daughters Alia, Angela, and Devon, without whom it would not have been worthwhile.

The imagination has been so debased that imagination-- being imaginative -- rather than the lynchpin of our existence now stands as a synonym for something outside ourselves like science fiction or some new use for tangerine slices on raw pork chops--what an imaginative summer recipe -- and Star Wars! so imaginative! The imagination has moved out of the realm of being our link, our most personal link, with our inner lives and the world outside of that world.

(John Guare, 1990)

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## Introduction

a more severe  
More harassing master would extemporize  
Subtler, more urgent proof that the theory  
Of poetry is the theory of life

As it is, in the intricate evasions of as,  
In things seen and unseen, created from nothingness,

The heavens, the hells, the worlds, the longed- for lands

Wallace Stevens  
("An ordinary evening in New  
Hampshire," Opus Posthumous)

As a language arts teacher of 28 years, I have always been struck by Stevens' claim that "a theory of poetry is a theory of life," that the purpose of art, and literature in particular, perhaps, is to help us make sense of existence. In Shakespeare's words, art is a "mirror held up to nature" wherein we may see our innermost selves. As a guiding principle, this has helped me frame my own practice in the classroom for what I feel have been good results: engaged students who "do well" (according to the standard measurements) on their final exams, and who take part in most activities in the classroom with what appears to be genuine interest and enthusiasm. I have always been of the view that if education were conducted from a perspective of fusing the heart and the head around the perennially important issues, the "big questions," that students would respond well. My colleagues involved in teaching the language arts, too, seem to strive for, and often hit, this same mark, particularly those of us engaged in teaching that very diffuse and broadly-based subject known as "English". We read novels, short

stories, and poetry with our students, investigating both style and content in the search for an insightful rendering of the text, or at least some appreciation of its nuances, that students can examine in their writing. We discuss important topics, and bring in prose readings to support various points of view, while explaining to our students the background history and intellectual currents that inform various positions and attitudes. We draw on insights from philosophy, psychology, history, political science, our own experience, and the daily news in order to weave a story in which students can begin to see the faint outlines of an understanding of life framed in an academic manner. They leave us with a fairly-well developed set of skills in both reading and writing, as well as with a more developed appreciation of intellectual pursuits in general, having tasted Pope's "Pierian Spring" and finding even a shallow draught somewhat refreshing. Nor are many teachers remiss in trying new ideas, new approaches to teaching, that would inform our practice and improve our results with the students whom we teach. Most of us have left behind the view that there is only one "correct" interpretation of any text, and have adopted a more constructivist, reader-response position that allows for various readings. Most of us, I suspect, accept that our own views form only one possible rendering of the "meaning" of any literary work, and that it is more important for students to learn to exercise their own voices than to adopt a repetition of our own.

That having been said, it is also true that many of us still feel as if we are somehow failing our students. Teaching is a profession in which most teachers perennially feel as if they ought to be doing more, or risk being total failures. No matter how much we struggle, no matter how much we plan, it always seems that any lesson we offer up could have been conducted differently, that opportunities have been lost, valuable insights not expressed, deeper understandings not achieved. We begin our lessons each day and hope for the best, searching for that elusive formula or strategy that will lead to the teachable moment that will justify

our role in the classroom, that epiphany in which our students will suddenly not only grasp the inner meaning of a poem or story, but will also find in that understanding a life-altering insight that will make the entire year worthwhile.

Alas, this kind of moment is all too infrequent, even in the best of classes. We have our successes, of course, or we could not continue. Some students seem to grasp what we are trying to do, and reciprocate with their own understandings which are genuinely felt and often insightful responses to a piece of literature or important idea. Yet at the end of the year, many students seem to leave school as if escaping from a prison. And although we often seem to achieve high standards with many students, many others graduate with only a basic understanding of the material that has been covered, and what appears to be relief at not having to learn any more. In a sense, many students have decided to "drop out" of an interest in academic pursuits, because learning is perceived as being either meaningless, or merely a means to an end of getting a place in the workforce. Schools may be doing a good job of helping most students meet the requirements of standardized exams, but it is not clear that they always encourage a love of learning, or even give students the attitude needed to pursue further studies with great enthusiasm.

We might also consider the situation from another angle, the rate at which students graduate -- or fail to graduate -- from our schools. Because a high school diploma is becoming a necessity in today's job market, the school completion rate is actually quite high, compared to previous years, when those who return to complete their studies within two years are taken into account. According to the *School Leavers Follow-up Survey, 1995*, (SLF) (p. 10), for example, the dropout rate in Canada as a whole was reduced from 18% in 1991 to 15% in 1995. In contrast, the dropout rate in the 1950's was approximately 48% (SLF, p. 9).

According to "Dropping Out of High School: Definitions and costs- October 2000," "Canada's dropout rate has been on a steep long-term decline" (p.1).

This improvement seems like good news, until we investigate the reasons why students continue to drop out, and the overall cost both to themselves and to Canadian society as a result. According to the *SLF*, one of the major reasons why students drop out is a general low lack of literacy, as measured in terms of skill use and self-assessment of abilities (p. 62). Of all the factors considered in a multivariate analysis, including socioeconomic status, family structure, and employment status, low use of literacy skills and low self-assessment of literacy ability are more highly correlated with being an early school leaver. In other words, literacy plays a central role in the determination of whether students will continue with their studies or become dropouts.

And the costs for dropping out are high. Students without a high school diploma earn less money, have lower levels of job satisfaction, and have higher rates of unemployment, than those who are more educated (*SLF*, p. 45-46). The net value of a high school diploma is set at approximately \$100,000 for those who graduate as compared to those with only grade 10, while the net return to the economy as a whole is approximately 17% higher ("Dropping Out of High School: Definitions and Costs," p. 2). Furthermore, the graduation rate for Canadian students remains at 7% below the OECD average ("Dropping Out..."p. 5). Although we live in an age of ever-increasing technological complexity which places greater and greater demands upon workers at every level, it is not clear that Canada is keeping pace with the rest of the world in creating a working population with the skill base necessary to remain competitive.

Nor do students themselves represent a homogeneous group who begin school with the same set of skills and abilities, or who progress through the system in the same manner, with the same set of fundamental requirements or capacities.

Students come to us from different ethnic and language environments, and as Shirley Brice Heath (1983) has pointed out, these differences have profound implications for the manner in which students “take up” the demands of literacy placed upon them by the school system. Often these students, as a group, tend not to do as well as the more “mainstream” students. For Aboriginal students, for example, dropout rates are higher, and successful completion rates on final exams are lower (Mackay and Myles, 1995). Our notions of literacy, and how it can be taught, while successful with many students, seem to be missing the mark here. There is a dearth of materials available for teaching such students, and often little shared understanding of what their needs are. Of course many language arts teachers are aware of these difficulties, and attempt to accommodate differences in background as far as is possible within the confines of a timetable divided neatly into one- hour increments, a general lack of training in teaching diverse students, a standardized curriculum, and standardized exams which determine whether students will or will not graduate.

Making this situation even more problematic is the fact that the very notion of “literacy” is itself undergoing a number of challenges. Willinsky (1990) for example, discusses the advent of the New Literacy movement, which is the outcome of decades of research which questions older notions of what it means to be a literate person, and the role of the teacher as facilitator of that kind of literacy. The notion still current in many schools is that literacy is the domain of the language arts or English teacher, with other teachers being content area specialists who require that their students be able to read and write in order to process text, but who do not see themselves as teachers of literacy itself. Furthermore, even a narrow definition of literacy as being a fairly clear measure of students’ ability to read and write is undergoing a number of fundamental shifts. At one time, literacy was seen in functional terms, as the capacity to demonstrate the

skills needed in the workplace. But it is clear that there can be a number of different kinds of literacy, and a student who can read and write in one domain, such as writing business letters or filling out application forms, may not function as well when creative writing is required. Students who are able to read manuals for programming VCR's may be unable to make sense of a poem or short story. It is possible to speak of cultural literacy, computer literacy and so on, utilizing a more metaphoric use of the term perhaps, but one which indicates that our understanding of what it means to be a literate person also needs reconceptualizing. The IRP in Language Arts for British Columbia, echoing changes made in other provincial jurisdictions, for example, has broadened the definition of the mandate of language arts teachers to include not only reading and writing, but speaking, listening, viewing, and representing. Many language arts teachers are beginning to see that literacy has to do with the manner in which we use language to interact with the world in a complex and nuanced fashion, not merely as a set of skills involved with our capacity to decode and process print text. Furthermore, as the new Language Arts IRP demonstrates, many teachers are beginning to realize that there are subtle interactions between speaking and listening on the one hand, and reading and writing on the other, that need to be addressed in our understanding of how classroom practice and discourse modes influence students' understandings. Teachers are also beginning to understand that viewing and representing can be forms of literacy, ones that can interact with our text-dominated notions of literacy to produce more complex and multilayered forms of communication.

Willinsky goes on to discuss the origins of the term "literacy," in an attempt to locate the New Literacy against the background of its historical roots. The term itself goes back as least as far as 1883, when it was used in the *New England Journal of Education* to claim that Massachusetts had the most literate population

in America. As Willinsky points out, the attainment of literacy is one of the primary claims of the public education system, and one of its central validations for its existence. The term "illiteracy" has a far older pedigree, extending back to the 17th century, according to the OED. Although the term "literacy" was used earlier, in the 15th century, it was used in connection with familiarity with literature, not simply with the ability to read and write. This links the term to the notion that literacy was the province of an educated elite, who promoted the skill of reading and writing, as a basic ability among the lower classes, for their own ends, that is, for the creation and maintenance of the modern state. Willinsky distinguishes between the notion of private literacy and public literacy, between the ends served for the individual by a capacity to read and write, and the skill of literacy as a useful tool for the society as a whole. As he points out, the focus in most schools seems to be on the question of how the skills useful for society are being inculcated into the young, as opposed to the question of how literacy can be used by the young as a vehicle for their own sense of empowerment and development of selfhood.

Along with this focus on the public uses of literacy is the sense of crisis which seems to perennially surround the issue, in spite of the evidence that literacy, at least in terms of the standard, unproblematized notions, has not diminished significantly during the last century. Steadman and Kaestle (1987) for example, indicate that literacy has actually been increasing since about 1880, fueled by growing numbers of students attending school. The situation is not completely positive, however, as there appears to be a growing gap between the literacy skills of many young school leavers and the demands of the marketplace, which appear to be increasing as technology and the information explosion place more and different demands upon everyone, and in fact, appear to be changing the very conception of what literacy entails.

In spite of all of these difficulties, however, there is a feeling prevalent among many teachers that if only we had the right approach, the right technique or “gimmick” that we could be successful with all students, that our practice in the classroom would come to be as fulfilling for ourselves and our students as the fondest wishes and hopes that we held as student teachers. But perhaps what is needed is not a new gimmick or strategy, but a fundamental transformation in how we conceive of the nature of education, and literacy in particular. Issues of philosophy are not treated with much depth in most teacher-education programs, the concern for most student teachers being the practical matter of the methodology to employ, the assessment materials to use, and the curriculum materials to cover. Many teachers do not have the background required for philosophic deliberation in any case, being subject specialists in areas such as shop, languages, physical education, art and so on. What philosophic reflection there is about teaching is often seen as being “merely” academic, where “academic” often means “of little practical value”. Many teachers’ notions of the philosophy of education are held unconsciously, or are a dim memory from a course taken to fulfill a requirement for teacher certification. But although it is certainly possible for teachers to be very effective in their classrooms without a deep knowledge of philosophical issues in education, it is at least helpful to have a sense of the connection between our implicit notions of education and the manner in which we choose to organize our classroom practice. If we examine some of those theories, we might begin to understand their impact on practice, and in particular, on our notions of literacy.

Kieran Egan (1997) has argued that there are essentially only three theories of education currently in vogue, and that these theories are in some sense incommensurable with each other. The first idea is that the purpose of education is to socialize people to fit into the society and culture in which they are raised.

According to Egan, the purpose of this kind of education is to inculcate the norms and values of society that currently exist into the next generation, to become “homogenized,” (1997, p. 11) to use Egan’s term. As Egan points out, this is a necessary role for schools to play, as it is a primary function of any society to reproduce itself, even though this act of “reproduction” may raise some serious political and philosophic issues concerning oppression when taken to extremes. A society that merely reproduces itself runs the risk, after all, of reproducing social divisions and class barriers as well. From the perspective of reproduction, however, the purpose of education is not to inculcate knowledge as an end in itself, but as a means to some other, socially desirable purpose. “Character” is considered to be an important component of the students who are produced by such an educational enterprise, and the teacher is seen as “an important social worker, primarily valuable as a role model who exemplifies the values, beliefs and norms of the dominant society” (Egan, 1997, p. 12). Such a view seems to stress the role of education in creating a harmonious society which minimizes conflict while creating a kind of democratic equality. Who could argue with such a concept of education?

Plato could. His *Republic* offers an example of a theory of education which seems to be at odds with this view. From this perspective, the purpose of education is to teach students the “truth” about the world by teaching them to be critical thinkers who can strip away the illusions of social norms, and who can thereby penetrate to some underlying bedrock of reality which only the intellectually-cultivated mind can reveal. The purpose of education is not to create conformists who mimic the social illusions and conventions of their predecessors, but thinkers who can challenge those beliefs, and by so doing, create a better world, one based on rational understanding. From this viewpoint, subjects such as geometry, which in many cases will not be of much practical value to the average worker, are useful for training the mind, for cultivating a rigorous and penetrating

intellect. And this too is a view of education to which many people subscribe. Who would dispute the notion that a healthy democracy requires not only an informed citizenry, but also one with the critical capacity to question the motives and behaviour of its leaders, and the values which are commonly held by the masses? In a sense echoing Augustine's notion of the City of God, Egan writes of a "transcendent conversation" (1997, p. 14) which takes place across time, uniting the human community through its shared intellectual traditions and understandings. Here the purpose of education is to allow the individual to become part of that conversation, to participate in the best that has been said and done throughout our shared past, free from the pettiness and parochial nature of modern times. And surely this, too, is a valuable role for education.

As Egan argues, however, this kind of education can be seen as elitist, as it tends to produce the "Golden people" that Plato spoke of, people who lead because of their intellectual gifts. In this sense, it seems to work against the more democratic notion of school as a socializing force. Furthermore, it hardly seems to make sense to inculcate social values on the one hand, while critically undermining them on the other. Can students be both harmonious members of society and critically aware skeptics of that same society? These two intentions, at their extremes, seem to work against each other. And a school system that does not even acknowledge these differing aims can hardly be thought to meet them both successfully.

Egan then turns to examining a third view of the purpose of education, Rousseau's notion of cultivating the natural capacities that each of us is thought to have. From this perspective, education ought to allow the natural talents and abilities of the students to rise to the fore as they develop. Here the educational psychologist becomes the determiner of "how" students ought to learn, as opposed to the "what" issue of curriculum content that is often the province of the

educational philosopher. From this perspective, teachers can best guide students by understanding first their developmental processes, giving encouragement whenever possible. Nature itself is thought to provide the model upon which this development is to be based, so that the natural good of each person can emerge, free from the taint of social institutions and their corrupting influence. As Egan argues, many of our “progressive” ideas about education stem from this view. At the extremes, students themselves are to create the curricula through their own interests, and teachers move from being authorities who are meant to disseminate “authoritative” knowledge to students, to facilitators who stand back, only intervening to help the students achieve their own potential in their own manner. And after all, shouldn’t this also be a goal of education? Shouldn’t we allow students to develop at their own pace, and in their own manner? Don’t we want students who are striving to reach their full potential, able to explore the world in their own terms?

But this notion of education, argues Egan, while perhaps offering some valuable insights about the importance of individual differences and learning styles, is difficult to make compatible with, for example, the Platonic notion of creating skeptical inquirers. The difficulty arises when we realize that for the Rousseauian educator, means and ends are not easily distinguishable. It is not that students will be left free to explore for themselves the great ideas of the past, fulfilling the same curricular requirements in a different manner. The means of learning, the discovery method itself, is central to both the means and ends of this progressivist notion of education. And in general, it is very difficult to separate our means from our ends in any case.

There are also issues concerning the nature of our understanding of the manner in which children develop. Modern educational practice is said to owe much to the work of Jean Piaget, who conceived of children as having an innate

developmental process which education needed to parallel if it is to be effective. But work by theorists such as Lev Vygotsky have drawn these notions into question: there may be a far more intricate relationship between the child's development and the content of the curriculum than Piaget or Rousseau may have understood. In *getting it wrong from the beginning* (2002) Egan challenges these notions by pointing to more recent theories based on work done in the biological sciences. The idea that there is some form of innate developmental process ignores at its peril the research findings which indicate that the mind develops through interaction with its environment, that development is in fact a fluid, dynamic process in which the experiences that children have are very much an important component of how their adult minds will be constructed. If this is the case, then leaving children "to their own devices" as it were, based on a faith in a developmental process that will roll merrily along unhampered by experience, seems to be problematic at best, and counterproductive in the extreme at worst. Finally, the Rousseauian notion of individual development separate from the corrupting influence of society can hardly be made compatible with the belief that the purpose of schooling ought to be to socialize students to become harmonious members of society, any more than it can be made compatible with their being critical, Platonic intellects. If students are going to be self-actualizing, free inquirers following their own notions of what constitutes knowledge, they will end as divergent individuals, not as fully-socialized members of a coherent community.

So what are we to do in the face of these conflicting demands and beliefs? As long as they go unrecognized, then, according to Egan, schooling cannot be effective in fulfilling any one vision, and so fulfills none of them very well. Perhaps this is why the educational system seems to be continually in the middle of political debates, always being accused of not meeting one or another outcome. If society as a whole holds these incompatible notions of what education ought to be, then

there will always be tensions among different groups holding different ideas, each group propounding its own value system as somehow being more educationally desirable than the other. And nowhere is this more true than in the field of literacy.

Consider what conceptions of literacy seem implicit in each theory of education. If we hold that the purpose of education is to socialize students and make them better members of society, then we are likely to stress the function of language as a tool of communication meant for social purposes. We may see the purpose of reading and writing, for example, as making students fit into the business world more easily. Literacy will be measured in terms of whether students can function in the workplace: can they fill out an application form, write a resume, or write a business letter? Spelling, punctuation, and grammar will take center stage as skills which the school system must inculcate in the young. Standardized testing may figure prominently in these concepts, for means and ends are often connected. Students may be graded on a curve, with each one measured against the other. High-stakes testing may be encouraged, the purpose of examinations being to help sort students into their proper social niche. Core texts may be chosen for their utility in demonstrating commonly-held values, and one "correct" interpretation may be stressed. These texts may be thought to express the "core values of Western culture," chosen because they have stood the "test of time" and have proven their greatness because highly-esteemed critics have pronounced their merit ( a view which may also, in some ways, be consistent with a Platonic notion of education). Being literate may involve not only notions of social conformity and utility, but also a sense that the students are being introduced to the most powerful concepts of history and art, and that being a literate, cultured person means being familiar with these ideas, and treating them as icons.

In contrast to much of this, a definition of literacy based on a Platonic view of education will be more likely to hold critical thinking to be at the core of the

curriculum, and may see literacy as being more distributed across all subjects as a means of applying critical thinking in various contexts. In other words, literacy may be seen as a means, not an end. Being "literate" in this view may be more consistent with having the capacity to deconstruct core texts to reveal their hidden biases. Such a view of literacy would stress the capacity for analytic thought, above memorization, as a key intellectual capacity. Students taught from this perspective may be encouraged to look for the "big ideas" in texts, and to argue for a variety of interpretations, perhaps incorporating social and psychological perspectives in their analyses. They may be more likely to read more "fringe" texts as well as the "great books," and to be encouraged to read one text against another in order to find a synthesis, or to see how one might offer an implicit critique of the other. Teachers working in this tradition may encourage their students to read "banned" material such as *Catcher in the Rye*, and to apply the concepts which they glean from these texts to a critique of modern society. Critical reading of texts will be mirrored by analytic writing which seeks to argue for or against particular positions, with overall structure and logical coherence being valued more highly than mechanics. Standardized testing may still be seen as important, but less so than the ability to respond to challenging propositions in an insightful, rational manner. The capacity to take a position with regard to the quality of a piece of literature may also play a significant role in assessment. Debate may be a key component of a course with this kind of focus, and students may be encouraged to question the pronouncements of politicians, advertisers, and parents.

In contrast to both of these views, a notion of literacy based on a Rousseauian theory of education might be more likely to value personal reflection and subjective response to literature. The question to be answered would not be whether a position is either "correct" or "defensible," but whether it expresses the

thoughts and feelings of the person doing the responding. How does this piece of poetry or fiction relate to the lifeworld of the reader? How does his or her response lead to greater personal reflection and development? Differences in responses will be encouraged, and discussions will centre on the “meaning” of the text as experienced by each reader. Journals and reader response assignments may figure as central methods of assessment, and students may be encouraged to demonstrate their understanding of text by a variety of means, including works of art or poetry as opposed to standard academic essays or critical analyses. The voice of the student as both creator and critic may be highly valued, and personal assessment may be a key component of grading, including the use of portfolios. Creative writing may be a central component in such courses, and highly-expressive forms of communication exploring feelings may be valued over more “rigorous” forms such as the essay.

But why is this diversity of approach a problem? It could be argued that this tentative, and perhaps simplistic division of literacy skills stemming from Egan’s three notions of educational theory is more apparent than real, that although one can make these distinctions, in real classrooms they don’t count for much. Teachers of English will respond to this listing by pointing to the fact that most classes in language arts value each of these modes of responding to literature, writing, and assessing student progress. If we were to look at the IRP in language arts produced by the Ministry of Education for British Columbia, for example, we would find that each of these components is given some weight, with a fairly clear “progression” from the more expressive, creative, Rousseauian notion of literacy to be found more often in the lower grades, to the more critically-based, Platonic notions to be found in senior English classes, the “basics” of English being stressed throughout. But at every grade level, language arts tends to be a mixture of all three “types” of literacy practice, with merely a change in emphasis as

schooling progresses. The final examination in English 12, for example, is divided into four sections, the first being a test of grammar and punctuation skills; the second and third being a measure of students' ability to critically analyze a poem and a short story; and the fourth being a personal, reflective essay or a formal critical response. By the grade 12 level, students are expected to demonstrate at least some proficiency in each of these "modes" of literacy. What else would we expect? In fact, if schools were not producing students at least somewhat competent in each of these "modes," they would be criticized for failing their students. Surely we want our students to be well-rounded and somewhat proficient in each area of literacy?

But Egan (1997, p. 23-24) argues that although this kind of mixture of theories may seem the logical result of trying to satisfy many masters, it does not lead to a coherent view of education or to a satisfying outcome. It can be argued that although some students seem to be able to become satisfactory in language arts in general, many, if not most students are not very proficient in any one of these areas. Egan calls modern education in the West a "set of flaccid compromises among these three great and powerful ideas," (1997, p. 24) and proposes that we need to reconceive education in a different manner if we are to be more successful at producing students who able to cope with the demands of a modern, fast-paced, pluralistic society. Further, as Egan points out, each of these conceptions of education is not only incommensurable with the other two, but each carries baggage of its own which makes it suspect as a valid notion of education. Even if we were to somehow decide that any one of these concepts was somehow superior as a theory, and adopt a view of literacy consistent with that position, it is unlikely that it would be any more satisfactory in terms of producing fully-educated, fully-literate human beings. We seem to be stuck in a dilemma, for we can neither

make the theories compatible, nor reasonably choose one to advance over the others.

What we seem to need is a more fundamental theory of education that could lead to a more powerful approach to the problems concerning literacy that I have addressed. The theory would have to allow for an approach that engaged students more deeply in a way that developed rather than curtailed a continued interest in learning; it would allow for an understanding of literacy as a capacity that is developed across the curriculum, not just in classes in language arts; it would have to address the various aspects of literacy that I have outlined, including the potential for critical thinking, cultural knowledge and self expression; it would be accessible by students from different backgrounds and cultures; and it would ultimately be based on an overall understanding of the nature of education that avoided the internal contradictions present in current concepts of both education and literacy.

Egan's answer is to replace these three notions with a different focus, one based on the idea of *understanding* at its core, not knowledge per se. From the perspective of this approach, education is characterized by the development of "cognitive tools," tools which are part of the cultural heritage of Western society. The details of this theory I shall leave for Part One, in which I lay out the theoretical context for Egan's view of education. In chapter one I shall begin by examining current research on literacy, and how that research has led to a position based on sociocultural insights, and with which Egan's notions are compatible. I shall also be pointing out the ways in which this current research has not addressed itself adequately to some key issues, issues that Egan's theories seem to deal with in a more powerful way. In chapter two I shall examine the historical background to our notion of the imagination, attempting to show how it has been thought of in terms of epistemology. Following this discussion, I shall examine more modern notions of

meaning, and the role that a focus on the imagination might play in developing our concepts of education. In chapter three I shall discuss the psychological basis for the theory by discussing the movement from oral cultures to literate ones, showing how the tools of orality can lead to a more fully-realized understanding of the framework upon which literacy can be based. In chapter four I examine Egan's theory, with particular attention to the development of Romantic from Mythic understanding. In Part Two I discuss two research projects conducted in the Chilliwack school district in which I attempted to apply Egan's notion of education to the teaching of history to two grade six classes. I conclude with an overall assessment of the value of imaginative education to reforming educational practice, particularly as it applies to the development of a more nuanced conception of literacy.

**PART ONE: THEORETICAL OVERVIEW**

## **Chapter One: Review of the research literature on literacy**

### **1.1: Introduction**

In this chapter, I am interested in outlining the history and current state of research on literacy in order to provide the beginnings of a framework for a discussion of how Kieran Egan's notions of imaginative education are not only consistent with the most recent developments in the field, but in fact seem to be opening new possibilities in a number of key aspects. In this discussion, I will briefly examine some of the changes that have taken place in our notions of literacy and the language arts over the past 50 years, and examine the issues of expressivism and student engagement as they are important for setting the stage for a more imaginative approach to the teaching of literacy. I will conclude by pointing to some deficiencies in current theory.

### **1.2 The historical background of literacy research**

The research literature in the area of literacy generally focuses on three main areas: writing, reading, and teaching as dialogue, or discourse. Each of these areas has undergone tremendous growth in understanding during the past few decades, a growth which parallels the development of new critical approaches to literary studies and critical theory at the university level. The formalist epistemology of the 1940's, and the New Criticism which grew out of that epistemology, were gradually replaced by structuralist theories and a focus on underlying processes. Presently, more dialogic theories involving an understanding of the learner and literacy practices as "situated" have come to

occupy a more central place within our notions of literacy (Sperling and Freedman, 2001).

One way to describe these changes would be to see a “progression” from behaviourist, to cognitivist, to sociocultural perspectives on literacy. Discussing reading research in the United States, Gaffney and Anderson (2000) claim that during the 1960’s, behaviourism was “ascendent at the intersection of education and psychology” but that by the 1970’s “cognitive science -- the amalgam of psychology, linguistics and computer science -- was born” (2000, p. 58). Much of this cognitive approach to learning in general and to literacy in particular was based on the work of Piaget, and others, which replaced previous Skinnerian, behaviouristic notions of how learning takes place with concepts focusing on the development of the child’s mind as he or she matured. From this perspective learning ought to be organized so that it took place at the appropriate time in childhood development to be most efficacious for students.

These approaches, however, seldom treated literacy itself as a problematic concept, preferring to frame it as an issue of how best to give students a skill set in order to read and write in a manner appropriate for social functioning. The question of how culture interfaces with that cognitive skill set was seldom addressed. Gaffney and Anderson continue by saying that “In the 1980’s, and on into the 1990’s, educational scholarship takes a political turn. By late 1980’s the avant garde are social constructivists....Situated cognition, blending cognitive and sociocultural concepts, moves to the forefront” (2000, p. 58). Writing of that same transition in approach, Rebecca Barr claims that

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This “brief outline” itself should be read as a kind of narrative account of the “progression” in understanding which has taken place, one way of organizing the events so as to make them amenable to investigation, rather than as a definitive account which seeks to relate the “Truth” of the situation.

Theoretically, this shift from behaviouristic to socioconstructivist formulations marks a change about thinking of teaching and learning as separate processes to those that are tied together, from viewing the teaching - and learning process as unidirectional to interactive, from believing what is taught is also learned to understanding that what is taught may not be what is learned, from viewing learning as an individual process to one that is social (2001, p. 407).

These more recent, dialogical approaches based on the sociocultural work of theorists such as Vygotsky offer a more nuanced view of literacy existing in a particular sociocultural framework, and as embodying a set of “cognitive tools” that cannot be treated as culturally neutral. As we shall see in chapter four, Egan’s theory of imaginative education is consistent with these sociocultural notions, while preserving much that was valuable from the cognitive perspective. Therefore, it is more likely to be able to address many of the concerns about literacy that continue to be problematic for both teachers and researchers today.

### **1.3: Research on writing**

A good place to begin this discussion is with an analysis of the work on writing, which has been intensely studied over the past few decades. The traditional view of writing as it was taught from 1885, when Harvard University imposed freshman writing courses on incoming students as a means of combating their perceived illiteracy, is that writing was mostly concerned with a product. These products were divided into what were felt to be neat classifications, or genres, which had rules to which freshmen needed to adhere if they were to be successful. Weekly “themes” might be set, and the method of composition “was strictly linear: outline, write, edit, submit” (Pullman, 1999, p.17). Style was considered to be characterized either by being clear, coherent, unified, active and

purposeful, or as being unclear, disorganized, passive, and vague. Subjects were often based on commonplace topics, clichés such as “Virtue is its own reward,” which the writer was meant to either support or reject. According to Pullman (1999), these essays were in the Aristotelian tradition, relying less on specific knowledge than on a capacity for informal reasoning and general understanding. Students were expected to improve their abilities through practice alone, and those who were unable to meet the requirements of this “traditional” approach to instruction were considered to be simply too unintelligent to benefit from college-level education. This same approach applied as well in most junior and senior high school classrooms as students were prepared for the world of work and of college. From elementary school to senior high, teachers often treated writing as merely a method of practicing the basics of grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and student essays were often returned covered in red ink as teachers corrected surface features with little or no comment on content, with a mark between an “F” or an “A” providing the final “grading” of the paper. Narrative writing was seen as something to be relegated to the elementary school classroom, a genre which students would outgrow as they moved into the more rarified realms of persuasive and literary essays.

In 1959, Daniel Fogarty labeled this kind of writing instruction “current traditional rhetoric,” and attempted to replace the writing-as-product approach with an model based on the work of I.A. Richards and S.I. Hayakawa, an approach that began to mirror the “scientism” which was becoming current in the social sciences. Treating writing as a process that could be studied empirically meant that writing instructors could create a more democratic means of teaching, one that would in theory allow all students to become proficient writers. Revision as part of the process moved center stage, and students were advised to draft and redraft their work in a manner that made writing less linear, and more recursive. Set topics

were replaced by more personal approaches that respected students' voices and experiences. Understanding writing as process was seen as a breakthrough development in the 1970's and 1980's, and workshops for teachers began to focus on breaking the writing "task" into easily digestible bits that could be taught to students much as one might program a machine. The process approach was considered to mirror more exactly the kind of method and stance towards the writing task employed by "real" writers, who almost always redrafted their work.

This kind of perspective can be seen in the views of researchers such as Flower and Hayes (1981), which reflect the cognitive perspective on writing which dominated the 1970's and '80's, and which argued that writing is composed of distinctive thinking processes which writers "orchestrate or organize during the act of composing"(1981, p. 366). This kind of thinking about writing led to a model, widely adopted by the teaching community, which focused on writing as a process composed of distinct subprocesses, each of which could be taught as a thinking skill, and which could be combined to produce a piece of writing as product. Brainstorming, revision and using graphic organizers for planning and writing provided major focal points for the process itself.

In some sense, the process approach to writing professionalized the teaching of writing, allowing for expertise to be applied in a fairly rigorous manner. This research also helped teachers understand how expert writers conceive of their task, as opposed to the lack of method demonstrated by novices, and formed a major basis for the development of writing programs which continue to dominate much writing instruction in schools today. This kind of writing instruction focusing on writing as process, studied by Hillocks (1986), demonstrated the effectiveness of such programs, particularly when teachers had a clear objective for writing, and when the instruction was given small groups.

There began to be growing dissatisfaction with this view, however, fueled in part by the work of the National Assessment of Educational Progress in the United States, which has shown that the poorest performing schools in writing assessments were those that were “characterized by an ethnic and racial diversity not seen in top - performing schools” (Sperling and Freedman, 2001). A concern over a growing gap in performance between schools led to a number of research projects that compared student performance cross-nationally. This research has led to an understanding that writing cannot be separated from its linguistic, cultural, and communicative context. This emerging understanding has led to a number of insights about the nature of writing and its connection to other aspects of literacy. According to Sperling and Freedman (2001) writing is both a cognitive and social process, and critical relationships exist between writing and other languages processes. In other words, writing cannot be treated as separate from oral language use or from reading.

Studies of this nature have been supplemented, in recent years, by further research which has attempted to incorporate social and cultural perspectives (Durst, 1990, Dyson and Freedman, 1991). Sociocultural and social-cognitive perspectives have focused on the question of diversity, and the issue of the learning experiences of students drawn from differing ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, researchers have had to extend their understanding of the context in which writing tasks occur to include more diverse social situations beyond the academic cloister of the classroom. Part of this focus on diversity has been a deepening understanding of the cultural context that shapes the approach of the writer to the task of writing. According to Sperling and Freedman, “Differences in conceptualizing the writer in context mark much of the current theoretical debate” (2001, p. 374).

This reconceptualization owes a great deal to the work of Lev Vygotsky, who helped researchers focus on the link between cognitive tools and the social context. Vygotsky was a Russian writer and theorist whose notions of the role of mediation in learning, and the Zone of Proximal Development, have had considerable influence in much educational theorizing since his ideas were first introduced. Cole and Scribner, in their introduction to *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (1978), a collection of Vygotsky's essays, point out that at the time that Vygotsky's ideas were introduced, European philosophy was divided into two camps: the empiricist camp based on the work of Locke; and those who followed Immanuel Kant, and his notion that experience alone cannot account for our capacity to form ideas. For Kant, there must be some more innate quality that made thought possible, a quality believed to exist in the absolute forms of space and time as they were manifest in the human mind. Both camps agreed, however, that the study of science was limited to the examination of the human body. The "soul" or mind of human beings was properly the subject for philosophy. This view, however, was radically challenged by Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), which attempted to show that human beings, and their minds, were also part of the natural world, and therefore open to scientific examination. Psychology began on the basis of scientifically examining human thought with two main schools: those who believed that thought could be reduced to its basic constituents, and those who believed that some aspects of thought required taking into consideration higher processes. The distinction between the "lower" physiological processes, and the "higher" mental functions still existed, echoing the division between Locke and Kant.

In contrast, Vygotsky, working in a tradition separate from the European one, attempted to demonstrate that these two branches could be united. In the Foreword to Vygotsky's *Thought and Language* (1986) Alex Kozulin writes that

Vygotsky's program for the new, nonreflexological scientific psychology contained the following directions: It had to be developmental; it had to resolve the problem of the interrelation between higher mental functions and the lower, elementary psychological functions; and it had to take socially meaningful activity (Tatigkeit) as an explanatory principle (p. xvii).

In *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (1978), Vygotsky claims that the social interactions between the child and others in society furnish the child with the basic psychological tools needed for higher mental processes, and that those processes themselves are embedded within society as a whole through its historical and cultural development. This notion of the importance of social interaction in helping to "scaffold" learning is also of importance in the development of reading. In terms of writing, Vygotskian theory points to the need for social interaction around those aspects of the writing task -- many of which have been identified by the cognitive approach -- with which the student will require assistance as he or she moves from novice to expert status. For Vygotsky, the developmental process depends heavily upon a classroom environment which nourishes that growth. The Zone of Proximal Development, or ZPD, defines the basic area in which learning and teaching ought to take place. Vygotsky's definition of the ZPD is "The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult supervision or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, p. 86). The role of the teacher, from this perspective, is to act as a mediator, or to provide mediational tools, which move the child from one level of development to another. This conception of education, of course, challenges the Piagetian notion that the educator operates within a preexisting framework based on a maturational process of intellectual development. Instead, by working with the tools of language, and by using them as

a meditational agency, the teacher actually helps form the basis of that psychological development.

One critique of this approach, however, is that it often places too much focus on the role of the teacher rather than the role of the learner (Cazden, 1988). Stone (1993) argues that the Vygotskian model needs to take into account the nature of teacher-student relationships, the value that both teachers and students place on the learning situation, and in particular, the “semiotic mechanisms of inferencing through which learners come to share teachers’ perspectives” (Sperling and Freedman, 2001, p. 374). An essential point here is that in order to take full advantage of Vygotskian theory, more work must be done examining the nature of teacher-student relationships. As Forman (1993) has pointed out  
...(E)ducationally significant human interactions do not involve abstract bearers of cognitive structures but real people who develop a variety of interpersonal relationships. . . appropriating the speech or actions of another person requires a degree of identification with that person and the cultural community that he or she represents (as quoted in “Research on Writing”, p. 375).

In other words, a full application of Vygotsky’s ideas will require that teachers are sensitive to the nature of the cultural, historical, and institutional contexts in which their interactions with students take place. This kind of perspective, of course, is fully supported by the framework of Vygotsky’s theory itself, and appears to be more of a logical extension of those ideas than a fundamental critique of them.

Another major contributor to modern notions of writing methodology is Bakhtin, who shares Vygotsky’s focus on the sociocultural nature of learning, but who places more emphasis on language itself as the primary focus of how culture interpenetrates our consciousness. Language reflects the cultural and historical roots of its speakers, speakers who themselves are formed by the language they speak. This is the basis of Bakhtin’s notion of “voice”. According to Cazden, “Voice

is Bakhtin's term for the 'speaking consciousness'. . . Voice and its utterances always express a point of view, always enact particular values..." (1988, p.198). This explains Bakhtin's notion of language and consciousness as "dialogical," that is, language reflects not just one person's consciousness, but the utterances, habits, and values of others who speak the same language, their historical and cultural "being," in a sense. Bakhtin (1986) also points to the fact that many of the voices that form part of our consciousness are themselves in conflict, that not just one perspective is represented, but many potentially competing voices. In writing in the classroom context, students are placed in a situation where they have to deal with the perspective not only of the teacher, but also with the voices of their peers as well. Dyson names three "social spheres of interest" (Dyson 1993, p. 13): the official school world, the world of peers, and the larger sociocultural community which exists both outside and inside the classroom: in other words, the values of parents and others in the social frame.

The implications are important, for this suggests that writers are not only always operating to balance out a number of different voices, but to make meaning in the context of the community in which they find themselves. Brandt (1992) suggests that writers are navigating the space between the context of the classroom, and the world of their primary affiliations, their "affiliations with the sense-making practices of a particular group say, feminists, or the Roman Catholic Church..." (p. 289). The implication here for the teaching of writing is that writing will be richer -- meaning making will be richer -- when students are allowed and encouraged to think and speak in the framework of these multiple voices, in a sociocultural context made deeper and more complex by perspectives drawn from other ethnic, historical or cultural groups. (Freedman, 1994; Knoeller, 1998). "In the next decade, writing research needs to press on the implications for communication, teaching, and learning and on the implications of incorporating

broadly-defined discourses into the established literate meaning-making practices of school" (Sperling and Freedman, 2001, p. 376).

These perspectives are brought together in Flower's (1994) model of discourse construction, in which the cognitive realm of mental representation of the writer and the realm of the reader are connected within the "outer circle" of discourse conventions, including social context, purposes, activated knowledge and language which inform both readers and writers as they communicate through text. Although readers and writers often share many of these discourse conventions, differences also emerge as readers grapple with the meaning of text as constructed by writers, so that internal representations of meanings overlap, but do not necessarily coincide. These differences include "questions, dilemmas, contradictions, and alternative strategies that they are either considering or have discarded" -- in Flower's words, "forces in conflict and roads not taken" (Sperling and Freedman, 2001, p. 376). This model allows for individual cognition as well, in terms of the role it plays in mediating between context, the external forces existing in the sociocultural environment, and the internal mental representation of the writer/reader.

The focus for classroom instruction, from this perspective, is to make the meaning-making process itself explicit, and available for analysis by both reader and writer. One of the key questions to emerge in this discussion is the issue of how the external context and the internal representation themselves interact in the composing process. Brandt (1992), for example, argues that the sociocultural context not only situates, but is situated by the act of writing. The social context is not seen as simply inert, taken in by the writer/reader and then mixed with memory and purpose to produce text, but something that is rather interpreted and justified through the process of composing itself, a creation and justification which is later re-created and re-justified in the mind of the reader, and in turn, changing the

nature of the sociocultural context which originally shaped it by becoming part of that context itself. It is at this juncture/boundary point that cognitive and sociocultural theories encounter the fuzzy area between their conceptual frames, and it is at this point where much research can be focused to produce more insights about the nature of literacy in its sociocultural and cognitive context.

This bigger picture of literacy will also have to incorporate other elements not always covered by traditional definitions. In particular, questions of the nature of the relationship between speech and writing have become foregrounded as researchers examine how teachers can connect their knowledge of oral and written language processes to the teaching of writing. An analysis of how speaking and writing differ as discourse modes has led to two general conceptualizations of how these modes are connected: they are distinct, although sometimes comparable; and speaking to others who are present can support writing in certain contexts. Of course these two fairly obvious insights lead to two questions which help frame our understanding of classroom practice: what changes to their discourse modes do students have to navigate as they shift from oral to written modes of discourse; and second, how do speech interactions in the class help foster the development of students' oral as well as written skills? These insights into the relationship between oral and written discourse have sparked questions concerning the role of varying sociocultural contexts and knowledge in developing the ability to write in academic settings.

This is one place where Egan's work is of obvious relevance to the construction of a more fully-developed notion of literacy. Egan (1997) describes the types of cognitive tools that form the "toolkit of oral language" that students bring with them to the varied tasks involved in learning and writing. He argues that these tools, such as story telling, metaphor making, using abstract binary opposites, rhyme, rhythm and pattern, forming images, narrative and others exist

as the basis upon which literacy itself is built. He locates these cognitive tools in a framework focused on the use of imagination, “the ability to think of things as possible -- the source of flexibility and originality in human thinking” ( 2004, p. 7). Egan’s work seems particularly well suited to bridging the gap in the learning and literacy development of students from varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds who may not have developed a standard toolkit for literacy as it is usually defined in middle-class, white cultures. Furthermore, Egan’s notion of Mythic and Romantic frameworks in the creation of teaching units allows for the integration of these cognitive tools in a way that leads to seeing the content of lessons as a whole, rather than as disconnected parts. Egan’s work goes a long way to bridging the gap between orality, which often works holistically in terms of organic connection, with the analytic and logical sequencing of literacy as usually practiced in schools. I will be returning to these concepts, and the role that they play in developing literacy, when I examine Egan’s theories in more depth.

Along with rethinking our conceptions about the role of speaking in learning to write, we also need to rethink or at least revisit our conception of the link between reading and writing. Most calls for balanced literacy programs emphasize the interactional and mutually supportive role that reading and writing play, yet researchers have not developed a comprehensive theory linking the two literacy modes across diverse settings. A number of questions at once suggest themselves, however, such as whether the cognitive processes which are employed by good writers are the same as or different from the skills employed by good readers; if we teach reading well, will this help students become better writers?

Results from research so far are mixed, but work which focuses on reading and writing as meaning-making activities (Tierney and Shanahan, 1991) as opposed to research which focuses on skill sets in isolation, seems to support the suggestion

that “reading and writing can be defined in terms of the same general cognitive processes” (Sperling and Freedman, 2001, p. 381). Other researchers (Langer, 1986), however, have concluded that although reading and writing may share some general cognitive processes, each is too complex in its own right to allow for the assumption that they are similar activities. Students who have good comprehension of text, for example, may not be equally adept at writing, nor may students who can express themselves well in writing be the best readers. Although reading and writing are linked in most integrated, whole-language approaches to literacy, each must be dealt with as a separate area of investigation.

#### **1.4: Research on Reading**

Just as research into writing has developed from a traditional, to a process approach, to a more sociocultural view, so research on reading has been informed by these same currents in intellectual thought. Part of this transition is reflected in the shifting conception of the nature of the reading process, and consequently a shift in the conception of how reading ought to be taught. Aside from a change from a focus on reading as a set of distinct subprocesses to a focus on reading as a sociocultural act, there has also been a growing interest in the issue of student engagement. In this section I will be examining how sociocultural notions of learning have impacted the research on reading, as well as how a growing understanding of the importance of student engagement leads to a view of teaching and learning that is consistent with the approach offered by Egan's notions of imaginative education.

According to Rebecca Barr (“Research on the Teaching of Reading,” 2001) there have been major shifts in the way in which the teaching of reading has been researched and implemented in the past decade. Barr identifies four major

thematic areas of interest which are evident from an analysis of the research: emergent literacy; early reading instruction; facilitating comprehension; and teaching situated in classrooms. Each of these areas offers a different understanding of the relationship between theoretical perspectives on literacy and learning, the connection to methodology, and how these ideas inform the work of teachers in the classroom.

If we begin by examining the area of emergent literacy, one of the fundamental findings of most researchers is that children need print and language-rich environments from an early age to facilitate their development when they enter school (Morrow and Rand, 1991). An area of debate focuses on the distinction between creating “print-rich environments and the need for more direct instruction” (Barr, 2001, p. 391). The research seems divided on this issue, with some researchers indicating that although a rich environment may be a necessary, it is not a sufficient condition, for literacy development, and that students require more direct instruction to take advantage of their developmental potential (Morrow and Rand, 1991). Most research focuses on one or the other of these areas, however, examining either teacher-led or student-centered methods of instruction.

As an example of student-centered methods, Kantor, Miller and Fernie (1992) examined emergent literacy as a phenomenon which would be facilitated by many informal experiences with print on the part of children. Their study began with the presumption that children would understand the power of print through their interactions with text and with each other, as text was sometimes used to mediate the social context. Data collection was ethnographically based, and involved observations of children while they played, as well as journaling activities by teachers, field notes taken by researchers, and interviews with parents. This methodology is socioculturally-based, taking as a presumption that literacy is socially constructed by children and teachers as they “participate in and use

literacy” (Barr, 2001, p. 393). Teaching itself is seen as part of this interactive context, not as a separate activity that occurs outside the learning of students. The results of the study indicate that informal writing experiences helped students to develop an interest in and knowledge of literacy. The further value of this research is to show how teachers might approach the teaching of literacy in ways unlike more direct forms of instruction.

A very common form of literacy instruction in early education is storybook reading, in which teachers read to students and comment and ask questions as they read, eliciting responses from students as teachers and students alike engage in the activity. Although this type of instruction is teacher-focused, it actually calls for the engagement of students as well, so that it can also shift focus between children and teacher as it unfolds, depending upon how the teacher chooses to scaffold the learning process as it emerges through the engagement with text. Dickinson and Smith (1994) for example, have found that when teachers offer explanations, vocabulary is enhanced. Dickinson and Keebler (1989) found that when teachers comment on the reading rather than asking specific questions, students’ comments become more complex, and their listening comprehension and expressive language use improves.

One study which examined storybook reading from a Vygotskian perspective was that done by Dickinson and Smith (1994), in which teacher-student interactions were examined through the lens of discourse. This study took as a theoretical frame the Vygotskian notion that children develop their cognitive and linguistic abilities through social interaction, in which an adult “scaffolds the constructive processes of children who gradually achieve autonomy in their performance” (Barr, 2001, p. 395). The researchers examined 21 variables based on patterns of talk while learning was taking place, including when utterances were made (before, during or after the reading); the type of requests

made (for more information, responses to requests); and content. Dickinson and Smith examined three different types of classrooms: ones in which interactions during reading were frequent, and the kinds of interactions involved many clarifying and analytic comments; ones in which the interactions were fewer, and involved mostly teacher initiated IRE (Initiate, Respond, Evaluate) patterns; and performance-oriented classrooms, in which reading was followed by extensive discussion focusing on “predictions and personal connections, a consideration of characters, and an analysis of vocabulary” (Barr, 2001, p. 394). The results of this study seem to indicate that the most useful form of interactions take place in the environments where students and teachers co-construct meaning, and where interactions are more complex, as opposed to the teacher-led, didactic approaches which tended to encourage memory-oriented learning and choral responses to simple questions.

In contrast to notions of reading instruction which involve whole-language approaches and sociocultural frameworks are cognitive perspectives such as those focusing on phonemic awareness in early reading instruction. The research findings seem to support the conclusion that reading is enhanced when students receive explicit instruction on letter/ sound associations as well as phonemic awareness (Bradley and Bryant, 1991). Research on phonemic and alphabetic methodology reported in “Learning and Teaching Reading” (2002) also supports the value of phonemic approaches to early literacy training. Such research points to the value of decoding skills as a basis upon which more nuanced literacy skills must be formed, while recognizing the limitations of such approaches. Torgesen writes:

One of the most important remaining challenges ... is to define the appropriate balance between phonemically explicit instruction at the individual word reading level and the instruction in broad language skills and comprehension that is most effective in producing optimum long-term growth in reading

comprehension, reading fluency and enjoyment of reading for at-risk children ("Lessons Learned from interventionist Research," p.101).

Torgesen's comments highlight the ongoing debate that has emerged regarding the relative merits of whole-language versus traditional, skill-based instruction in reading and writing. One study which compared these two approaches was the Dahl and Freppon study (1995) examining how inner-city children in the United States cope with the challenges they face as beginning readers and writers. This study was particularly focused on how these students differ in their interpretations of instruction in traditional or whole-language classrooms, gathering data from field notes, student papers, and pre- and posttests of written language knowledge. The study found that although both groups progressed in their understanding of letter-sound relationships, the whole language learners were better able to examine intertextual relationships across stories, and had a greater range of coping strategies when working independently than those students from the more traditional classrooms. Furthermore, the Dahl and Freppon research indicated that in terms of teacher methodology, whereas the traditional approach treated phonemic awareness as a skill taught independently, the whole language approach also taught phonemic awareness, but in the context of lessons on literature. Dahl and Freppon's study was, in a limited sense, socioculturally based, in that it was interested in the students' responses to and interpretations of their learning, and how that learning, and their motivation, was shaped by their environment. What is missing from this approach, from a sociocultural perspective, is an understanding of how the acquisition of cognitive tools is of fundamental importance in how that environmental shaping takes place.

Another criticism that could be made is that the Dahl and Freppon study fails to indicate how teachers using the same theoretical approach apply that

perspective in terms of differing methodology. Focusing on learner response is useful as a research tool for understanding learners, but creates a false dichotomy by ignoring the patterns of behaviour of the teachers employing the same philosophic approach but using differing teaching strategies. Barr points out that research ought to focus on both the learners and the teachers as part of the interactive whole that teaching entails: "The assumption that researchers must choose between a focus on teaching and learning must be questioned; we learn the most when both aspects of this interactive whole are represented" (Barr, 2001, p. 398).

We enter the area of most current reading research, however, when we move beyond the level of decoding of text and into the issue of facilitating comprehension. The cognitive approaches to reading of the 1980's have led to a focus on strategies employed by readers as they encounter text. Such strategies involve activating prior knowledge, monitoring text while it is being read, previewing and predicting, taking advantage of text organization, using graphic organizers, using writing strategies to process reading material, summarizing main ideas, setting purposes for reading and so on. Central to these types of strategies is the notion of metacognition, that is, making students aware of the strategies which they are employing while they are reading. Much of this research in recent years has shifted into looking at the development of literacy strategies among "special" populations such as learning disabled and bilingual students.

The focus of research has also shifted in another way too, from a strictly cognitive perspective to one rooted in more sociocultural theory, as researchers began to focus not only on the strategies to be employed by students, but also to how student-teacher interaction could facilitate learning. This shift in focus includes an analysis of how teacher methodology affects student learning, with some researchers examining how the strategies introduced by teachers affected

student literacy compared to other teachers employing more traditional techniques (Duffy et al., 1986). Qualitative research methods have also become more common, using interviews, journals, and observations of teaching in order to capture the “flavour” of particular teaching situations (Saunders, O’Brien, Lennon, and McLean, 1998).

One study that demonstrates the confluence of both cognitive and sociocultural perspectives is that of Beck, McKeown, Sandora, Kucan, and Worthy (1996) which investigated the effect of having students question the author’s meaning, both given and inferred, from a class discussion of texts in content areas. A number of strategies were taught to the students as well as to the teachers as aids to guide discussion, but unlike some other studies in which carefully-crafted scripts were provided to teachers, general guidelines only were provided in order to allow students and teachers to co-construct meaning as they read and encountered text. The analysis was qualitative, with the focus being on the nature of teacher questions, and the amount of teacher-talk versus student-talk during discussions. The study demonstrated a change in the type of questions asked by teachers, from content -retrieval to questions promoting construction of meaning, while the proportion of teacher talk diminished and the amount of student talk including questions and comments increased. Student comprehension as measured by standardized testing also showed an increase by the end of the year. This kind of research, although utilizing insights drawn from the strategies/cognitive approach to literacy, also drew upon a sociocultural perspective in which meaning is co-created in the classroom through teacher student interaction, and supported the notion that discourse is a key element of instruction.

In contrast to both the cognitive skills and the sociocultural approaches, the research in reader-response to literature has its origins in the field of English. Here

the emphasis is on the response of the individual to the work of literature, and on the kinds of discussions that ensue when a teacher-led discussion focuses on student responses, rather than being a stage for the teacher's view of the piece to be communicated to students. The research has tended to be case studies which attempt to examine the discourse of classrooms to discover particularly "rich" interchanges, and to examine how individual responses contribute to those discussions, sometimes called "grand conversations," defined by Eeds and Wells as "deeper meaning, enriching understanding for all participants" (1989, p. 5). Eeds and Wells examined how teachable moments could be used to focus on the literary elements being discussed. Their research focused on four teachers teaching four different texts to students in fifth and sixth grade, and analyzed the discussions based on the number of teachable moments produced, as well as on the amount of student versus teacher talk during the discussions. Their conclusion was that focusing on the responses of students, and moving the focus away from a teacher-centered discourse pattern, was successful in deepening students' responses to and understanding of literature.

An important component of all of these approaches to reading, both sociocultural and reader-response, has to do with the development of student engagement with text as essential for meaning-making. Wilkinson and Silliman discuss the notion of engagement in their research into classroom literacy practices. In summarizing their discussion and examining emphases for the future, the authors argue strongly that teachers should be encouraged to adopt the engagement perspective, which focuses not only on active learning, but also on the interaction of literacy across the curriculum:

The engagement perspective highlights the importance of motivation in learning to read and underscores the social basis for classroom learning...Importantly, classroom learning is linked with both motivation

and strategies in learning to read. From this viewpoint, classroom activities should be designed to motivate students for reading and writing and to provide them with opportunities to use language for meaningful communicative purpose (Wilkinson and Silliman, 2000, p. 349).

In this context, they also call for “grand conversations” (p. 343) which emphasize discussions mediated by teachers who model language use in a manner that allows for the scaffolding of student understanding. In words echoing the research done on writing by Sperling and Freedman, they point to the Vygotskian concept of literacy as necessarily involving the appropriation of cognitive skills by students who make them their own through usage. Similarly, Rogoff argues that through dialogical participation, students “transform their understanding of and responsibility for activities (and) in the process become prepared to engage in subsequent similar activities” (1995, p.150). Wilkinson and Silliman argue that it is essential for this development and transformation that there is a classroom context where “individual student differences are respected due to the construction of multiple zones of proximal development . . . through which participants can navigate via different routes and at different rates” (2000, p. 345). In other words, good literacy practice involves the possibility of differentiation achieved through multiple zones of proximal development in which students transform their capacity to use cognitive tools through interaction in meaningful activities integrating reading, writing and speaking. This perspective naturally leads us to a discussion of emerging notions of discourse in classrooms.

### **1.5: Research on Dialogue**

A growing number of researchers are becoming interested in how literacy instruction is situated in different classrooms with different cultural and material

conditions. In these studies, the assumption is that the culture of the classroom is constructed by the language that is used in instruction, as well as by the cultural conditions of the students' home lives. An important study in this area is that done by Shirley Brice Heath (1983) in which she compares and contrasts the sociocultural backgrounds of three groups of students in South Carolina: low socioeconomic status African-Americans in an area known in the study as Trackton; low socioeconomic whites in an area known as Roadville; and middle class white and black students from a small city in the same area.

Heath's analysis traces in detail the language environments in each of the three areas studied as she uses ethnographic techniques to demonstrate how each cultural situation produces differing skills among the children. In particular, Heath's study raises questions about our notions of literacy, and what it means to be literate, by showing how each cultural situation creates literacies appropriate for use in that cultural situation. Yet when the children from these areas come to the school environment, their differing backgrounds produce markedly different results. Trackton students, who were extremely flexible in their language use, and who were highly imaginative in their capacity to generate narrative, found that their different orientation to space and time, to extended narrative sequence, and to logical sequencing and categorization, meant that they were ill-equipped to function in the classroom, where different oral language skills were required as a scaffold to middle-class definitions of literacy.

Roadville students too found that although they share certain features of orientation to space and time with their middle-class classmates, their lack of imaginative response to open-ended storytelling opportunities proved to be detrimental to their continued growth as students. Their backgrounds were filled with stories with moral messages, stories which reflected their religious heritage. For Roadville children, stories which depended upon flights of fantasy and

unbridled imagination were considered a form of lying, and were strictly curtailed in their culture. Most literate activities in their environment have narrowly prescribed utilitarian ends, such as letter writing, making lists, and leaving messages, and focus on literacy as an aid to memory, but not necessarily as an extension of imagination or analysis. As a consequence, although these students initially appear to fit into the culture of the classroom well, as time goes on, they tend to fall further and further behind their middle-class peers.

In contrast to both of these communities, the children from the middle-class homes in the town were able to employ different language codes, emphasizing both imagination as well as logical analysis. These students had been read to as children, and had been encouraged to use their imaginations to extend and question the stories they had been told. From a very early age, these children had been exposed to a language environment which stressed how discourse can be used not just as an aid to memory, but as a form of imaginative play. Mothers asked questions of their children on a continual basis, and the type and frequency of questions changed as the children matured. Furthermore, parents encouraged behaviours in their children which also supported the environment which the children would be facing in school: they were required to pay attention, to take turns when speaking, and to answer questions put to them by adults. Children were also encouraged to repeat stories which they had heard before, ensuring that the logical sequencing was maintained. The students' own experience was often accessed during storytelling sessions, and the preschool teachers often employed questioning strategies that used children's experiences and elements of the story in joint meaning-making activities.

These kinds of activities in their early years gave the townspeople's children a distinct advantage because as Heath points out, the school is not a neutral playing field, but an institution which changes people's values, skills, and

knowledge. And on that playing field, some of the children from more middle-class environments come more prepared to play because of their linguistic background, which has already helped the children rehearse the codes of the school. Heath's study also discusses how teachers who were made aware of these differing cultural and linguistic traditions among their students were able to modify their methodologies in ways that played to the strengths of the children, while gradually developing in them the kinds of skills more useful in a classroom setting. The results were very encouraging, and demonstrate that it is possible, using ethnographic data, to adapt teaching methodology to help scaffold students' abilities in the interests of developing literacy, as usually defined.

Another study working from a similar set of understandings of the importance of examining classroom discourse patterns in order to mediate students' learning is Courtney Cazden's *Classroom Discourse* (1996). Cazden raises the question of whether there are some aspects of teaching which need to be modified for their impact on particular cultures, as well as some aspects of teaching which could be employed cross-culturally as being good for students from all cultures. Knowing which aspects of discourse are shared cross-culturally, and which need careful modification for the classroom depending upon which cultural code is being taught, is an important consideration. Cazden's research suggests that although there are some aspects of teaching and learning which have a cross-cultural basis, each situation calls for an increased sensitivity on the part of teachers, and an awareness that each culture may very well employ differing assumptions about how classroom interactions ought to proceed. She discusses Susan Phillips' study of the interaction patterns of Native American children in Warm Springs, Oregon. Phillips had pointed out that these Indian children failed to participate verbally in classroom interactions because the social conditions for participation to which they had become accustomed in the Indian community were

lacking. In her review of the Indian versus the non-Indian students' verbal participation, two features of the Indian children's behaviour stood out: they showed more reluctance to perform in front of other students when they were required to speak alone; and second, they were not as willing to speak when the teacher decided who ought to speak and when.

These two studies help us understand that dialogue should be a central focus for research in order to conceptualize how classroom teachers' interactions with students mediate the students' development of other aspects of literacy. Furthermore, this kind of study helps us to see that teaching and learning have to be considered as a whole, not separated into distinct elements for study. The classroom itself cannot be seen as a distinct world, but one that is enmeshed in a sociocultural context in which the culturally developed tools of orality are always either helping or hindering the further development of certain kinds of literacy.

Burbules and Bruce (2001) extend this notion of interconnection when they point out that the notion of dialogue as text connects to reader-response theory in reading development. But whereas reading response theory tended to place the reader in the center as the object of study by attending to his/her interpretations of a given text, notions of dialogue as text and of reading as a kind of dialogue refocus our interest on the nature of the relation between the reader and text. The reader is not simply a receiver of a given meaning which the text contains, but an interactive part of a "dialogue" with the writer through the text. Burbules and Bruce quote Cazden (1996):

Models of reading that may have served reasonably well in the past have thus been challenged. Literacy research is now reaching beyond its familiar boundaries to consider alternative conceptions of reading, writing, and sense making. In particular, the field of literary studies and its concern with issues such as how understanding beyond horizons is possible, how readers adopt different stances toward a text, and how

the meanings of authors, readers, and communities interrelate, leads inexorably to new conceptions of literacy (p. 1115).

In the context of this discussion, Burbules and Bruce raise a number of issues concerning the nature of pedagogy in the light of this new understanding of the role of dialogue in classroom, issues concerning the nature of difference and enculturation. If the dominant norm of what is considered literacy in classrooms is itself challenged by our growing understanding of the non-neutral nature of dominant discourses, then we have to ask in what ways our conceptions of literacy have excluded certain voices in our classrooms. To what extent can we see other cultural groups “difficulties” in learning to be literate in terms defined by the dominant culture as a form of protest? To what extent are we really dealing with a form of cultural hegemony that acts to subvert identity in the name of transmitting skills? Burbules and Bruce write:

What happens when one tries to reconcile prescriptive approaches to pedagogy with the reality of diverse linguistic forms, attitudes, values and experiences? Is dialogue inherently normalizing, or can it be adopted to broader horizons of inclusiveness? Yet (perverse) when it does succeed at being more inclusive, is this at the cost of requiring participants to give up or compromise elements of their difference? (p. 1118)

### **1.6: Expressivism and the New Literacy**

One obvious way in which to think about this question of inclusion and diversity is to consider how the notion of the New Literacy may address these issues. One of the main proponents of this approach is John Willinsky, who argues in favour of a view of literacy that emphasizes a focus on students as meaning makers. In *The New Literacy* (1990), Willinsky examines the ideas behind a movement which seeks to make reading and writing more meaningful to the

students in our schools who find the current educational climate to be alienating and stultifying. Willinsky argues that the approach to literacy which stresses the attainment of "culture" through the examination of the canon only further alienates today's students, while it simultaneously creates a system in which some people -- those who control schools -- define what is "good" and what is not. Willinsky is seeking to offset the approach to education which mechanically processes students as if they were part of a production line, with the attendant deskilling of teachers which such approaches to education entail. He writes:

The New Literacy speaks directly to teachers reasserting control over the work that goes on in the class, even as it attempts to hand a greater part of the locus of meaning over to the student. It represents a taking hold of the curriculum by the teacher at a fundamental level by challenging the meaning of literacy in the classroom, as well as the nature of a teacher's work with the students (p. x.).

Writing in the introduction to *The New Literacy*, Apple argues that the new literacy seeks to redefine literacy itself, not as an isolated set of skills, but "as a *social process*, as a 'form of life' " (p. x) that connects the individual to the community, to history and to his/her own biography. Implementing such programs is a political as well as pedagogical act, requiring a great deal of courage as well as effort on the part of teachers, who find themselves fighting the forces which seek to make schools places merely of reproduction of the given order. Apple says that societies reproduce themselves not merely by the power of their industries and armies, but through the "rhythms and textures of culture, consciousness and everyday life" (quoting Batsleer *et al.*, p. xi). Therefore challenging the mundane elements of how schools conduct their business may be a powerful means of reorganizing the way in which culture itself functions. Echoing Heath, Willinsky points to the fact that historically literacy has not been a neutral enterprise, but one

in which the dominant culture attempted to inculcate its values through the choice of texts, as well as the modes of teaching, that existed and continue to exist in schools.

As sources for this New Literacy, Willinsky points to a number of recent innovations in both reading and writing methodology such as Whole Language, the Growth Model, Language for Learning and Writing Across the Curriculum, Schema-Theory, Reader Response Theory, Transformational Reading, and the Writing Process Movement, including the Bay Area Project. Willinsky claims that the New Literacy lies latent among these other movements. He argues that literacy ought to be defined not as a set of isolated skills, but as an activity that takes place in the world, involving “a social process in a daily landscape” (p. 6). The New Literacy movement has as its aim changing the meaning of classroom work, to be about student understanding and empowerment, not about the conveyance of traditional cultural norms:

One of the major contentions of this book is that the New Literacy is as much about the way educators work with students and texts

in a classroom as it is about improving instruction in literacy (p. 7).

He supports this notion of examining how educators work with children by referring not to a body of established research data, but to a personal question that teachers should ask of themselves, such as: “Are these the lessons I want students to learn about literacy?” (p. 7) Willinsky then gives a defining characteristic of the New Literacy:

The New Literacy consists of those strategies in the teaching of reading and writing which attempt to shift the control of literacy from the teacher to the student; literacy is promoted in such programs as a social process with language that can from the very beginning extend the students' range of meaning and connection (p. 8).

As Willinsky points out, this approach to teaching echoes the sentiments of Dewey, who held that “education which does not occur through forms of life, forms that are worth living for their own sake, is always a poor substitute for the genuine reality, and tends to cramp and deaden” (*Pedagogical Creed*, 1988, p. 169. First Published 1897). According to Willinsky, from this perspective, literacy becomes focused not on the skills and abilities of the student, but upon the engagement with text directed towards some purpose, some end that the student has in mind. The role of the teacher here must change from being the sage-on-the-stage to being a coach, helping the student define and shape his/her goals; an editor, helping the student shape the draft to its final form; an agent promoting the work in various venues around the school; and a publisher, helping the student produce the work and having it circulated.

Willinsky goes on to critique the the adherents of the New Literacy movement, however, for being naively optimistic in their expectations about the impact that the New Literacy can have, and about how it ought to be implemented. In particular, he critiques progressivism as abandoning working class children rather than operating to free them. He quotes Walkerdine: “Although some have suggested that progressivism frees working class children from harsh authoritarianism, I would suggest precisely the opposite. Progressivism makes the products of oppression, powerlessness, invisible” (“Progressive pedagogy and political struggle”, *Screen 13*, 1986, p. 59). According to Giroux “To be literate is not to be free, it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one’s voice, history, and future” (Literacy and the pedagogy of voice and political empowerment.” *Educational Theory* 38 (1):1988, p. 65). In effect, Willinsky asks us to address the issue of how the empowerment of students through a new form of teaching literacy will actually manifest itself in the world. In the end, he is concerned that in the shift of focus from teacher to student as meaning-maker in

the classroom, that we do not lose sight of the real questions that continue to plague literacy, questions having to do with issues of the self and of meaning making in general: who is it that the New Literacy addresses itself to, that is, what is the nature of the self which the New Literacy will simultaneously expose and develop as it proceeds?

It is at this point that Willinsky turns to the issue of expressive writing. Expressive writing is that kind of writing which is aimed at revealing the self of the writer, as opposed to the interpretive mode, which is focused on writing as an act of analysis of other texts. Expressivism is child-centered in that it places the central role for meaning-making in the hands of the writer. As a stance towards literacy, the notion of expressivism in writing helps to open the door to the inclusion of imagination as a mediational tool in literacy development, a notion of literacy which goes beyond mere "expressivism".

From this perspective, Willinsky's ideas help us understand what is missing from current conceptions of good literacy practices in schools. Echoing the notions of Wilkinson and Silliman, Willinsky is calling for literacy practices in schools to be more attuned to issues of empowerment and engagement. The notion of expressivism is a useful lens through which to understand this need. His critique opens the door to asking for us to create a fully-theorized framework in which such engagement could take place. This leads us to the question of how a focus on the imagination might provide just such a theoretical understanding.

### **1. 7: Literacy research and the imagination**

Now in all of this current research, one thing that is obvious by its absence is interest in the link between literacy and the imagination. Heath of course mentions how imagination is valued differently by different racial and socioeconomic groups,

but doesn't explore this connection to a great degree. Vygotsky talks of the importance of the imagination and of play for children as they learn to extend their understanding of the world, but this point has rarely been taken up by many researchers in the field, who prefer to examine zones of proximal development more than the imagination itself as a mediational tool.

There are a few exceptions to this apparent lack of interest in the imagination, however. In *Regarding Children's Words: Teacher Research on Language and Literacy (2004)*, Roxanne Pappenheimer examines how individual students in a special education class used their imaginations to negotiate their way through texts in ways not usually appreciated in standard classrooms. In particular, she notes the depth of engagement that students seem to evidence as they became involved in the text they read, and how they took up roles and identified with the characters. For many of these students, the novels they read became an entry point into the "real" world outside of the novel when the students used the text as a mediational tool to act out behaviour from the novel in reality. The lives and experiences of the characters often "mapped onto" their own lives, and acted as a focal point for discussions about their own problems and concerns. By "becoming" the characters, they seem to be able to develop ideas and understandings that otherwise seemed foreign to them. Pappenheimer mentions Egan in this context, pointing out that students can use their imaginations to broaden their empathetic responses to others by taking on the roles and identities of the characters themselves. In fact, she argues that this leads to another potential dimension of literacy, the development of a more ethical relationship to others based on an empathetic response honed through an imaginative engagement to literature.

Following the same approach to the value of the imagination in the development of literacy, Karen Gallas (2004) discusses the manner in which her students exercised their imaginations as they developed more "literate" responses

to their worlds. She identifies three areas in particular which she feels are central to the development of literacy by children: identity, discourse acquisition, and “authoring”. Echoing the notions of James Gee (1990), she begins by defining what she considers true literacy to be, the capacity to “live in the body of the subject, identifying with it in a visceral way and translating that identification into action in the world” (Gallas, 2004, p. 124). For Gallas, reading is an ontological act, by which she means that it is a process that has a dramatic impact on the self of the reader. She discusses the work of Madeleine Grumet (1988), who describes reading as a “broad cultural practice embedded in the particularities of each individual’s social, physical and emotional life -- a practice which she (Grumet) believes has been cut out of the process of schooling” (Gallas, 2004, p. 124.) Gallas goes on to describe her own interactions with students, and how she began to question her own notions of imagination and how it ought to be used in classrooms. She asks, “What does the imagination look like in its different forms? How does it work for children who are different from myself? Where does it fit into the process of literacy learning and teaching?” (Gallas, 2004, p. 127).

Gallas describes her experiences as a teacher watching children as they appropriated new notions of identity by learning to “walk in the shoes” of adults with whom they identified, such as scientists, reminiscent of Vygotsky’s notion of how children learn to appropriate various cognitive tools by first trying them out as an aspect of play. She describes this process of identity appropriation as a discourse between two modes of thought, the imaginative and the critical. Gallas quotes Meadwar, who describes the actual process of scientific discovery in these words:

Scientific reasoning is therefore at all levels an interaction between two episodes of thought-- a dialogue between two voices, the one imaginative and the other critical; a dialogue. . . between the possible and the actual, between proposal and disposal, between what might be true and

what is in fact the case (p. 133).

In other words, the students in Gallas' class deliberately chose a discourse mode which allowed them to create a special kind of relationship to the identities which they were attempting to inhabit, a relationship in which becoming the persona of the scientist allowed them to appropriate his/her voice, and so act out in the role the manner of speaking appropriate for that role. In fact, according to Gallas, it is the capacity of children to appropriate the voice of the other that gives them the power to access and control the text which they encounter.

It is at this stage that Gallas introduces the concept of "authoring", which occurs when students work in a social environment, and when the products of their interactions both with texts and with each other are put on public display. From this perspective, students are engaged in a process in which they are using a social site to utilize their imaginative interactions with others in order not only to produce a certain kind of product, but to influence how others see the world as well. In other words, students are engaged in an act of interpretation that has as part of its rationale the transformation of the worldviews of others as well as themselves. Performance may be an essential component of many aspects of imaginative education, opening doors for other kinds of assessment not often considered in many classroom settings. Gallas argues that "For literacy to become an inside-out process that is driven by the imagination, it must be 'organically born from the dynamic life' (quoting Ashton-Warner) of students" (Gallas, 2004, p. 147). When students are allowed the space to make public the workings of their own inner lives in a manner that respects their own purposes as learners, then they can move to a higher level of engagement with the material of the curriculum, a notion that Gallas describes as "heretical" for most literacy teachers.

Another powerful example of this fusing of the imaginative with the more typical approaches to classroom learning comes from Kornfeld and Leyden's study of the effects of using an imaginative approach to the teaching of history, a methodology which in some respects resembles the one utilized in my study for the LUCID project, discussed in Part Two. In *Acting out: Literature, drama and connecting with history* (2005), they describe a project in which they attempted to teach history to first graders through an integrated approach involving language arts, social studies, art, music, and drama. The researchers/teachers attempted not only to integrate a variety of curricular materials and outcomes, but to have the students act as researchers as well. Central to their findings was the fact that this kind of approach, which places much of the focus on the students' engagement with the materials, also acted as a means of empowerment. By recasting what they were studying in the form of drama, the students came to "own" their learning in a new way. Although Kornfeld and Leyden did not make literacy instruction a cornerstone of their study, they did reflect that meaning making is central to any approach to literacy development, and that their students were continuously engaged in authentic literacy practices as the unit unfolded. This notion of making literacy practices and activities authentic by placing them in a larger context from which the individual practices can draw their meaning may be an essential component of an imaginative approach to curriculum in general. I shall return to this subject as part of the analysis of the results of the second study done for the LUCID project.

### **1.8: Summary and Conclusions**

What conclusions can we draw from this very brief overview of current research on literacy? Although there is still much disagreement in the field, a

number of perspectives seem to be emerging. Traditional notions of writing as involving the capacity to produce certain genres or products have been superseded by the notion that writing and reading can be seen as a set of processes involving various cognitive abilities. In turn, seeing literacy simply as a set of “processes” to be taught in a piecemeal fashion has been itself superseded by the view that all learning is embedded in a sociocultural, historical context. In all areas, reading, writing and discourse, sociocultural insights informed by the work of Vygotsky, and perhaps to a lesser extent, by Bakhtin, seem to be becoming central.

At the same time, however, earlier cognitive approaches have not been entirely abandoned. Literacy is now seen by many researchers in a somewhat broader context, as being involved not just with reading and writing, but with multiple modes of language use in multiple contexts. Responsibility for literacy is therefore not only the province of the language arts teacher, but of all teachers across the curriculum. Literacy is seen as one of the most important sets of cognitive tools that culture passes on to the next generation, and that process involves scaffolding and mediation of the act of meaning-making in a variety of modes. Classroom discourse is at the centre of that mediational process, and teachers’ responsibility is to provide the context and framework in which students from many cultural backgrounds can learn to exercise and develop their literacy abilities. This necessarily involves a variety of classroom activities in which learning is seen to be a social as well as cognitive act, in which students and teachers together co-construct meaning. Literacy practices must somehow take account of student diversity, developing cognitive tools without imposing one dominant cultural notion of literacy in the process.

Another key aspect of literacy that has emerged from the research is the importance of developing student engagement in the learning task itself,

particularly in terms of how students become involved and engaged in the various “texts” which exist in the classroom, whether they be print, visual, or discourse. “Rich” exchanges and “grand conversations” figure prominently in this perspective, and the development of meaning through a variety of activities drawing from reading, writing, and discussion becomes a central focus. The notion of empathetic engagement is also important here, as is the idea that an imaginative response to literature may be the key to ethical growth. Allowing students the freedom to appropriate the voices of professional adults as they identify themselves with various roles may be a key to their full development of various cognitive tools. In fact, the notion that the best type of student engagement is a kind of directed “play” in which students become fully-engaged actors while they appropriate adult roles and understandings through the use of cognitive tools may be a good way of characterizing such a teaching and learning environment.

How is Egan’s notion of imaginative education situated in the framework of current research on literacy? As we shall see in the following sections, the concept of the imagination as a process which allows for culturally-embedded cognitive tools to be used to mediate student learning seems to offer a rich context for educational practice across the curriculum in a manner completely consistent with the most promising areas of current research, particularly as it applies to student engagement and the co-construction of meaning.

At the same time, the concept of using the imagination as a means of utilizing cognitive tools, in the context of a new approach to the question of childhood development, seems to address problems which current research on literacy has not fully examined. Current literacy research provides the necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for fully engaging students on every level. Although the question of engagement is on the horizon of some research, Egan’s theory seems to place students’ emotional responses at the centre of our attempts to

develop not just literacy, but all forms of learning. Finally, I am interested in how an imaginative approach to literacy can be a means not only of improving learning, but also how it might be a means of liberation. As Gallas and others have argued, literacy is at the centre of the way in which students learn to interact with the adult world by appropriating voices and modes of discourse; as such, it is also at the centre, ontologically, of who they are learning to become in the world. An imaginative approach to teaching and learning might also be a means by which students can come to own their own meaning making and in some sense, learn to “author” themselves as learners and human beings.

In the next chapter, I shall be discussing the historical background of the imagination as it has been seen as part of Western epistemology. I shall begin by asking some very simple questions: Of what value is imagination in education? How has it been seen historically in epistemological terms, and how are current notions of epistemology informed by our understanding of the imagination? In chapter three I shall discuss work done by Eric Havelock, Walter Ong and others in order to provide the context for a more full understanding of how Egan’s notion of cognitive tools has support from other research. In chapter four, I shall examine Egan’s concept of imaginative education in detail, discussing his notion of cognitive tools, and contrasting his theory to our current “progressivist” ideas, as well as some of my own ideas regarding the importance of the imagination in education, before moving on to Part Two, and the research in the field using these concepts in the classroom.

## Chapter Two: The Archeology of the Imagination

### 2.1: Introduction

Of what use is the imagination in education? We often think of the imagination as something reserved for children, for bedtime stories of Hobbits and Orks, or of wizards casting spells. Stories of long ago and far away, of ghosties and ghoulies and long-legged beasties and things that go bump in the night may have their place in fairy tales and childhood games, but of what value can they be to sober, mature adults who need real information about the real world in order to navigate life successfully? What legitimate role could the imagination possibly play in education?

If we take a cursory look through numerous educational journals or books, we find few references to the imagination. The *Handbook of Research on Teaching, 4th ed.* (2001), for example, does not list the term “imagination” in its index, nor does the *Handbook of Reading Research, Volume 3*, (2000). Neither the *Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Education* (2003) nor the Hare and Portelli *Philosophy of Education* (2001) lists any articles dealing with the imagination in its table of contents. An ERIC search of recent articles does list a number dealing with the imagination, particularly in the arts and literacy studies, but few of those articles place imagination in the center of their discussions, assigning it instead to a peripheral role.

There are, of course, some exceptions: I have already discussed the work of Pappenheimer and Gallas, and their attempts to bring imaginative education alive in the classroom. But although both researchers acknowledge the value of the imagination and have some valuable points to make, their work remains largely unknown, and seems to lack a connection to any fully-developed theoretical

framework. Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* (1977) discusses imagination at length in its examination of the Freudian nature of fairy tales. But although Bettelheim examines the influence of fables on character, he says little about the educational value of the imagination in the classroom. Margaret Spenser did discuss the importance of the imagination at length in her keynote speech "What more needs saying about Imagination?" at the 19th World Congress on Reading in 2002, but aside from a general claim that imagination in the classroom is a very valuable thing, gave little concrete advice on how the imagination ought to be used. And although the imagination has been highlighted as a special issue in education in the March 2005 edition of *Teaching Education*, as an educational concept or category, it seems to have been relegated to the background of educational interest or concern by much of the educational community.

Of course most educators would agree that the imagination is important, but probably few would be prepared to explain how they are utilizing a fully-developed theory of the imagination -- or any theory -- in their classrooms as a necessary adjunct to their teaching practice. There is little indication that teacher-education programs stress the importance of imagination for those new to pedagogy. When the imagination is mentioned at all, it tends to be undertheorized, and the definitions that are employed are often rather facile, lacking any complexity or nuanced understanding of the many dimensions of possibility that the imagination as a concept can provide. In discussing this lack of theoretical depth in discussions of ethics, for example, Tierney (1994) says that:

Philosophers have tended to neglect the concept of imagination as a means of understanding the domain of the ethical. One reason for this has no doubt been the variety of conceptions of the imagination which have developed over the centuries. The imagination is a notoriously difficult concept to define (p. 16).

Perhaps this relative lack of interest in the imagination is a consequence of something missing in our current conceptions, something lacking that needs to be rediscovered, or understood for the first time. In this chapter, I would like to examine the historical context of the imagination, what I term its archeology (following Foucault) to show that it has always been a contested concept, one that various philosophers have struggled with in their notions of epistemology. This investigation will reveal some of the key issues that have arisen as various philosophers have attempted to grapple with the imagination and its relationship to our other mental capacities: how does the imagination play a role in perception? In memory? In knowledge formation? How are we to understand the role of images in epistemology? How are imagination and meaning related? If the imagination has sometimes been dismissed historically as a necessary aspect of understanding, how do new conceptualizations of epistemology reintroduce the imagination into education? How should we think of the imagination -- as a "faculty of mind," or as the mind operating in a certain mode? Can the imagination be defined as a definite concept, or has the concept changed as our epistemology has changed? Along the way, I shall also be discussing the historical context for many of these conceptions of the imagination: how have changing historical circumstances informed our understanding of the imagination and the role it plays?

## **2.2: The Hellenic Period**

As with most examinations of the history of Western thought, it is perhaps useful to begin with the Greeks. In chapter three I will discuss Eric Havelock's description of Plato's ideas regarding poetry and its potential to delude its hearers by the use of poetic devices to cloud the mind through the fusion of content and form. Here I am interested in Plato's epistemology, and his rather negative

conception of the imagination. Of course, there are reasons for Plato to feel the way he did. Historically, Greece during Plato's time was rife with political unrest. The execution of Socrates, Plato's mentor, at the hands of those whom Plato had assumed would restore order and morality to Athens, must have influenced his notions of how the state ought to conduct its affairs. The necessity for creating a rational, ethical framework for ruling must have been predominant in his thinking. Speaking of his sense of disgust at the manner in which political affairs had been handled, he says:

At the same time the whole fabric of law and custom was going from bad to worse at an alarming rate. The result was that I, who had at first been full of eagerness for a public career, ... fell at last into bewilderment (Plato's Letter, *The Republic*, p. xviii).

No wonder he fears that a state ruled democratically would result in a "drunken pleasure cruise." For Plato, the imagination must have represented all that was unruly and uncontrollable. What was needed was order, not the chaos of unpredictability that the imagination seemed to threaten.

Aside from these personal feelings, however, the suspicion which we can perceive in Plato's response to the problem of knowledge and its relationship to the imagination reflects deeper Greek antinomies which had been the subject of debate since well before Plato: the material versus the spiritual, the absolute versus the relative, progress versus tradition. Fifth century Greece was torn by the contrast between the Periclean ideals of human progress and achievement, set against the earlier ideas, represented by Hesiod, that human beings existed in a decayed state. For Plato, although modern Greeks had made technical progress, they had fallen from a state of innocence in which they were nearer to the gods (Tarnas, 1991). Society could only save itself from complete decay if it were to find absolute values upon which to build a secure political foundation. For Plato, this

meant finding some source of transcendent, cosmic order which would serve as a template upon which the state could be formed, a notion itself based on an earlier theory developed by Anaxagoras, that there was a rational teleology behind the universe's existence.

In his discussion of the Greek worldview and its influence on later Western intellectual development, Tarnas points to a basic inconsistency latent in various stands of Greek philosophy. On the one hand, the universe is knowable through the power of the intellect. The universe itself is intelligible only because it is rationally ordered, the universal telos of Anaxagoras. At the same time, however, that transcendent order could be fully apprehended only through what Tarnas calls the plurality of human faculties: "rational, empirical, intuitive, aesthetic, imaginative, mnemonic, and moral" (1991, p. 70). In other words, much of Greek thought seems to be describable as an attempt to reconcile notions of the rational with the religious or metaphysical, a reconciliation which requires the full powers of the human intellect. The separation of Mythos from Logos can be seen, in this light, as an attempt to replace one paradigm with another, while somehow maintaining elements of both. What we seem to have here is a kind of mysticism which uses reason as a means of penetrating to that which lies beyond the material realm, attempting to reconcile the two stands of thought in a grand synthesis.

For Plato, however, such a reconciliation did not seem possible. There is an internal conflict apparent in Plato's notion of the link between epistemology and the imagination, for no matter how he attempts to reject the imagination, it seems to remain as a necessary element in understanding. As we shall see when we examine Havelock's discussion of Plato's rejection of poetry, Plato seems very clear that the imagination is a dangerous thing, something that had to be controlled in his republic if men and women were ever to organize their political affairs properly. He relegates poets and artists to the lowest order, and says of them

We seem then, so far to be pretty well agreed that the artist knows nothing worth mentioning about the subjects he represents, and that art is a form of play, not to be taken seriously (*The Republic*, P. 333).

For Plato, the essence of things was to be found in the eternal Forms of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, knowledge which was absolute, and which existed in a realm removed from the world of mundane reality. Plato's notion of the Divided Line illustrates his conception of the link between epistemology and imagination. Above the Line exist the Forms, intelligence, (*noesis*) reasoning and first principles (*arche*). Here images are used only as a means of assisting the intellect, as in visible figures used as illustrations of mathematical ideas. Below the Line lie belief, opinion, and illusion, *doxa*, characterized by the work of poets, artists, and Sophists. In this conception, to know something requires that one be able to frame one's knowledge in an objective form, to move away from mere imagery to the reality which is transcendent, beyond mere appearance. Knowledge is propositional in nature, and theoretically available to anyone able to use his/her mind to see beyond the limitations of the material world to penetrate to the truth underlying surface appearances. Reason is the key to this enlightenment, for it is conceived of in the familiar metaphor as the charioteer who holds the reins controlling the steeds of the passions and the appetites. Or in another metaphoric image, the knower who employs his reason is able to walk free from the cave of ignorance, no longer deluded by the shadows that play upon the wall, unreal images of more real Forms that exist on a higher plane of reality.

Interestingly, however, although Plato attacks the role of the imagination in knowledge formation, he utilizes metaphors and images in his discussion to illustrate his point. The imagination is not easy to avoid. Our understanding of Plato's point is at least in part dependent upon our ability to "take up" the meaning implicit in the image of the cave, or the metaphoric resonance of the charioteer as

reason grasping the reins of the passions. How such an act of “taking up” meaning involves the imagination will remain problematic not only for Plato, but for those who follow him in attempting to create a model of the relationship between the knower and the known. Even Plato is forced to use a metaphor and image, and elsewhere he has described the relationship between the knower and the known as that of a lover who embraces his beloved, linking knowledge to a form of erotic possession.

What makes the discussion even more problematic is trying to understand the imagination as Plato uses it. The term “phantasia,” which is most often used in Plato’s writings, can refer to either a truthful representation, or to illusory appearance (Friese, 2002). In discussing Plato’s use of the term, Halliwell writes “Imagination is best taken to entail not a distinct mental faculty, but the operation of belief, emotion and judgment in connection with hypothetical events” (1995, p. 26). Plato seems to write as if the notion of the imagination itself were straightforward. He makes no overall claims about how it functions in perception, except in the indirect sense of creating *doxa*, or opinion. In general, Plato understands that the imagination presents problems for epistemology, but he seems content to let those problems remain essentially unexamined. His attempt to reconcile the Mythos-Logos tension by subsuming the role of the imagination to reason is only partially successful.

In contrast, Aristotle seems to have realized that the imagination could not be simply disregarded as a human faculty in reasoning. His *De Anima* presents a fully worked-out account of how the imagination operates, linking it in particular to sense perception, as well as to other attributes of the mind such as memory, dreaming, and thought. This connection to perception, which conceives of imagination as *dependent* upon the senses, however, is at the core of much disagreement among commentators. Aristotle’s theory is clearly given an empirical

cast in this view, one which leaves little room for its role in higher forms of cognition. In her discussion of Aristotle's theory, however, Wedin (1988) argues that, given Aristotle's views on the nature of physics, although he may have attributed a central role to perception in forming representational states in the perceiver, it does not follow that he did not allow for the possibility of a creative role for the imagination as well, one that would involve reason. In fact, in discussing the perplexing case of animals, who clearly are able to perceive, but who also clearly lack imagination, Aristotle is driven to the conclusion that "were they to have imagination, they would be capable of determinate action" (Wedin, 1988, p. 41). Here the imagination is seen to be a necessary condition for higher thinking. In fact, Wedin makes the claim that:

Not only is imagination co-occurrent with perceptions in the sense indicated but also it is co-occurrent with dreaming, remembering, desiring, thinking and the like....: it is what enables something to occur as the object in an episode of thinking, dreaming, remembering, and so on (1988,p. 53).

In other words, for Wedin, Aristotle's conception of the role of the imagination extends beyond merely being necessary in forming perceptions, and thus being tied to sensation and the material realm, but is also linked to the higher cognitive powers as a necessary adjunct to their operations. In contrast to Plato's notion of the eternal Forms which exist in a transcendent state, Aristotle's epistemology is more empirically based. For him, all knowledge begins with sense perception, and all other human mental faculties depend upon sensory information. The imagination acts on those images, and thus provides a means by which they can be actualized. Tarnas says that "Man requires sensory experiences to bring the mind, with the help of mental images, from potential knowledge to actual knowledge . . . Yet it is man's reason that allows sense experience to be the basis

for useful knowledge” (1991, p. 60-61). Here it is clear that Aristotle is attempting to balance the power of reason and sensory impressions against the other powers of the mind, particularly its image-making ability. He makes a useful distinction between *imaginatio* on the one hand, and *phantasmata* on the other, *imaginatio* being the faculty to receive sensory impressions, while *phantasmata* is the power that bundles these perceptions together (Friese, 2002). In his notions of categorization, Aristotle had to deal with the issue of how we are able to create categories from sensory impressions, a problem that will continue to provoke much controversy in philosophers from Hume to Kant to Cassirer, as we shall see. Here Aristotle invokes the power of the imagination to create categories through the process of combining similar impressions, giving it a clear role in knowledge formation.

Aristotle also seems to acknowledge the importance of metaphor in imagination, as when he discusses its role in the theater, and the use that dramatists make of setting things before the eyes of the audience or reader in order to elicit certain kinds of emotional responses. This might explain why Aristotle’s notion of art entailed the idea of mimesis as well as identification. It is not simply that we trace the pattern of life in its dramatic realization on stage, but that the watcher becomes part of the action, becomes in fact part of the lived myth which drama often represents for the members of society. In this sense, drama is a ritual in which we represent to ourselves those elements of our social being which inform some aspect of our individual selves. It is an imaginative act that utilizes what might be termed the “mythic consciousness” of its members to create a sense of unity between the individual and the cultural fabric of which he or she is a part. This is a view fully in keeping with the power of the imagination, as Havelock describes it, to allow for the transmission of culture through time in a preliterate society, a view of art against which Plato so strenuously objected.

In the end, however, Aristotle separates the metaphoric power of imagination from the pursuit of knowledge, preferring to emphasize the more literal power of imagination to form mental pictures, a conception which Tierney claims "entrench(ed) the empiricist attachment to mental images and so help(ed) to seal imagination's fate as a capacity irrelevant to truth" (1994, p.135). For Aristotle, although the imagination is a necessary component of thinking, giving reason its material to work on in the form of images, it must be subordinate to reason itself, which working on the images, produces real knowledge. Aristotle has presented us with a more nuanced conception of the imagination and its relationship to perception, memory and epistemology than had Plato, but it is a conception that ultimately reduces the function of the imagination to a subsidiary role.

### **2.3: The Middle Ages**

Historically, the end of the Hellenic era saw the rise of Christianity as a predominant paradigm in Western thought.<sup>1</sup> As Tarnas (1991) has argued, however, Christian thought itself was imbued by strands drawn from Judaism as well as the dual legacy of Greece -- the attempt to reconcile the empiricism of Aristotle with the mysticism and rationalism of Plato. On the one hand, we may view this as a source of conflict, but on the other, it may also be seen as a source of creative internal tension. These strands of thought combined to produce a world view that allowed for the conversion of the pagan mind to a more Christian one, while preserving the latent dichotomies inherent in Hellenism. The Greek concept

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What I offer here is not a "grand narrative" which attempts to "explain" Western civilization in a reductionist manner, but instead an overview of some historical trends and ideas that are useful in contextualizing aspects of the discussion.

of Logos, for example, is transformed into the notion that Jesus is the word made manifest in the world; the Platonic Forms now exist as part of the mind of God, and the philosopher's desire for transcendence becomes attainable through faith in Christianity itself. The eternal realm had broken through to the mundane, and redemption was possible through belief. The notion of Cosmopolis, the World City, once an ideal of the Stoic philosophers of Greece, is born again, this time transformed by Christian thought. The idea that all human beings can share in a universal brotherhood made possible by the Logos of reason is now replaced by the notion that Jesus himself, as Logos born into the world, is the redeemer who makes the mundane world at last one with the transcendent. Here faith, rather than knowledge, becomes the basis for human salvation, for it is only through faith, not reason or empiricism alone, that human beings can achieve the ultimate connection to God. Nature is seen as embodying, on the one hand, God's handiwork, a work which in its original form was pure and good; but on the other, it is an impediment to attaining spiritual purity, for it is, in a sense, that which must be overcome.

This attitude towards knowledge of the natural world, then, creates another kind of dualism, a mind-body split which would be taken up in Christian thought as symbolizing the carnal aspects of original sin. Satan is described in the New Testament as the prince of this world, emphasizing his connection to the mundane and the bodily. Christian culture eventually distances itself from paganism by rejecting its sexual dimension, stressing the "purity" of the spirit. The coming of the apocalypse would signal the final reconciliation of human beings with God. In the interim, Christians would abstain from this world, being "in the world, not of it." The Platonic spirit-body dualism becomes infused with Christian concepts, and severs from nature any immanent divinity. The created world will be the site of redemption, after all, even if it is itself in a fallen state because of Man's sin. This dualism itself

can be viewed as another manifestation of the Hellenic spirit, in which the opposites are brought into a creative tension; the attempt to resolve these tensions will drive Christian thought for several hundred years. At the same time, these inner tensions provide the fuel for a radical transformation of the Christian world view, and open the door for the imagination as essential for our understanding of the world.

One of the most important elements in this transformation comes about as a consequence of the rediscovery of the works of Aristotle, whose empirical approach to reality found fertile ground among Church intellectuals during the early Medieval period. The use of reason to defend faith had been acceptable for many years, thanks to the arguments of Aquinas, who attempted to reconcile matters of faith with the emergent understanding of the natural world impelled by Aristotle's teachings. Changes in the church itself also drove this new acceptance of the natural world, especially the teachings of the Dominican and Franciscan orders. The notion that the church need not be an intermediary between human beings and God, but that people could speak directly to the Almighty through their immersion in the sacred fellowship of nature, paved the way for another kind of reconciliation, that between the immediate particularities of human experience, and the transcendent realm itself.

Aquinas' attempt to bring together these elements in Western thought was influenced not only by the works of Aristotle, who offered both an empirical approach to nature, the particularities of experience representing the Many, but by Neo-Platonic ideas as well, involving the notion of the all-pervasiveness of the One. Of course, the traditionalists in the church were concerned that interest in the natural world would lead people astray from their true focus on the transcendent realm, that the notion of natural laws diminished human freedom, as well as God's ability to create without restriction. In contrast, Aquinas argued that human nature

was modeled after that of God, who had created us not only in his image, but with some of "His" powers of creativity. Further, he argued that an appreciation of the rules by which nature functioned led to a greater understanding of the power of God, and rather than undermining faith, ought to enhance it. Tarnas writes:

Man is matter as well as spirit, and human cognition must reflect both principles: knowledge is derived from the sensory experience of concrete particulars, from which universals can be abstracted, and this knowledge has validity because in recognizing the universal in singular things the human mind is intellectually participating, however indirectly, in the original pattern by which God created that thing (1991, p. 185).

Aquinas makes another point as well, one that will be of profound significance for the development of the Western mind. He makes the argument that human beings can have knowledge of the external world because of a likeness between Man and God, and therefore between Being and knowledge. By allowing the soul to participate in the particularities of the mundane realm, and to draw forth from that experience knowledge of universals, Man reflects in his own nature the power of God. Like Plato, who attempted to conceptualize the nature of the bond between the knower and the known, Aquinas begins the process of drawing together the elements of the self and the objects of knowledge. By knowing the natural world, a world created by God, human beings were therefore becoming in a sense more like God himself, both in His creative capacity and in His knowledge of the created world. It is our capacity to draw knowledge of the universals from our particular experiences that allows us to participate in this type of transcendent understanding.

Thus Aquinas attempts to reconcile Platonic notions of the Forms with the Aristotelian notions of particulars in a Christian context. And at the core of that reconciliation is a vision that unites epistemological with ontological concerns. The

creative tension of the Hellenic antinomies has resulted in a Christian synthesis allowing for the development of all of human beings intellectual capacities: rational, aesthetic, emotional, and imaginative. By the time we get to the late Medieval period, this creative tension has manifested itself in the notion that the apprehension of reality requires more than sterile logic, but an appreciation of beauty as well. In this conception, nature is permeated by the divine, and human beings are capable of direct insight into that divinity through the power of both reason and the imagination combined. The Humanists' vision of reality is akin to the later Romantic notion that nature is suffused with meaning, and that meaning is best appreciated through the exercise of all of our faculties, but perhaps particularly the imagination. Tarnas writes:

Imagination now rose to the highest position on the epistemological spectrum, unrivaled in its capacity to render metaphysical truth. Through the disciplined use of the imagination man could bring to his consciousness those transcendent Forms that ordered the universe. Thus could the mind recover its own deepest organization and reunite itself with the cosmos (p. 215).

But behind this facade of reconciliation, however, the deeper Hellenic dichotomies remained unresolved, dichotomies that would infuse and inspire much of the Renaissance and Reformation. According to Tarnas (p. 219) with the rediscovery of Platonism, the ancient balance between the role of reason and imagination, spirit and body, immanence and transcendence, nature and spirit, external world and interior psyche, was again emerging. The discovery of the lost works of Sextus Empiricus, a defense of Skepticism, fueled a growing sense that the ancient worldview that had held sway for a thousand years was disintegrating. If the workings of nature and the workings of the mind were not in accordance, undermining Aquinas' view that we could know God by knowing nature, then how could certainty be found?

## 2.4: The Age of Reason

In fact, the problem of certainty was the rock upon which the growing influence of Humanism threatened to founder. In discussing the creation of the modern world view, and in particular, our notions of rationalism and its application to all facets of the world, Stephen Toulmin (1990) examines the end of the Humanist influence, and the beginning of the so-called Age of Reason which preceded the Enlightenment, concluding that this historical period was central in the construction of our notions of Modernity. According to Toulmin, the Humanist tradition, exemplified by writers such as Montaigne, Erasmus, and Shakespeare, was noted for its gentle skepticism and tolerance of opposing viewpoints. Humanists had a great curiosity about the human condition, and stories brought back from the travels of explorers only fueled their interest in the exotic. The Renaissance was characterized by a very modern notion of the uncertainty of human knowledge, and the consequent necessity for openness when facing any problem, philosophic, scientific, or religious. For Toulmin, this phase of the Renaissance might properly be considered one of the roots of modern sensibilities, just as much as the later Counter-Reformation insistence on certainty as well as scientific, positivist concepts in epistemology can be.

Unfortunately, this openness to new ideas, which was accompanied by an almost Aristotelian interest in the particularities of human experience, created a great deal of anxiety among many members of the church, particularly when this tolerance for inquiry was combined with the assaults on church doctrine implicit in both the Protestant movement and the Copernican paradigm shift in astronomy. The Christian version of Cosmopolis itself -- the fusing of the coherence and stability of nature with that of the social order created by human beings -- was

threatened on all sides by these new ideas, which seemed to separate human beings from the cosmos in profound ways. What was needed was order and stability, a stability founded on hierarchy, with everyone "knowing his place" in the proper scheme of things. Toulmin traces the roots of the disputes which rocked Europe to the philosophic and religious uncertainties which precipitated the Thirty-Years war. That period of uncertainty, he argues, led to the Counter-Reformation, and the desire to find certainty in the world of nature. He says that:

Rather than expanding the scope for rational and reasonable debate, 17th century scientists narrowed it. To Aristotle, both Theory and Practice were open to rational analysis, in ways that differed from one field of study to another. . . . Seventeenth century philosophers and scientists followed the example of Plato. They limited "rationality" to theoretical arguments that achieve a kind of quasi-geometrical certainty or necessity. . . . Descartes and his successors hoped eventually to bring all subjects within the ambit of some formal theory; as a result of being impressed only by formally valid demonstrations, they ended by changing the very language of Reason -- notably key words like "reason", "rational", and "rationality"-- in subtle but influential ways (1990, p. 20).

This discursive move to limit our understanding of the meaning of "reason" to a Platonic, abstract understanding is part of what Toulmin describes as the basis for the construction of Modernity itself. He argues that Descartes played an essential role in that development. Ironically, Descartes stepped into the middle of the debates that had been raging on these issues with a desire to demonstrate how skepticism could be overcome, and the interior world be once again reconciled with the exterior reality. In so doing, however, he created grounds for even more profound skepticism. His work is pivotal in understanding how our current conception of the imagination has evolved historically, for Descartes finds himself

in the middle of the problems which have beset our understanding of imagination since the beginning of Western culture.

On the one hand, Descartes wished to advance the methodology of scientific reasoning by stripping away everything that could be doubted in order to find an "Archemedian point" which would allow him to construct a sound epistemology. On the other hand, he wished to reaffirm the importance of free will and the existence of the self in the face of a materialistic universe. What role does the imagination play in mediating between these two conceptions of reality, the corporeal, sensory realm; and the mental, immaterial realm?

Consider the words of the Sixth Meditation:

I remark besides that this power of imagination which is in one, inasmuch as it differs from the power of understanding, is in no wise a necessary element in my nature, or in (my essence, that is to say, in) the essence of my mind; for although I did not possess it I should doubtless ever remain the same as I now am, from which it appears that we might conclude that it depends on something which differs from me (Meditations, P. 58).

Descartes has overstated his case. Without the imagination, our being, our "nature" would be profoundly different from what we currently experience. Cartesian dualism posits a distinction between the subject and object, between the "ghost in the machine" and the world observed. This is an important building block in the pantheon of positivism, for it allows for the mathematization of reality. But the role of the imagination is to overcome the disjunction between the self and nature through the power of metaphor and imagery. Mythos and logos differ in exactly this regard: that mythos creates a discourse between the self and the real, fusing the two in a manner that has epistemological, axiological and therefore ontological consequences. Logos acts to abstract from the welter of experience the essential, that which can be isolated and controlled, not experienced as whole. Ironically, the original intent of the discursive move to Logos was just the opposite -- to create a totalizing vision that would bring all reality under its purview through the power of

reason, standing in contradistinction to the Mythos embodiment of the particular in historical time. When Wordsworth writes in "The World is too much with Us" that "Getting and spending we lay waste our powers; / Little we see in nature that is ours," he is pointing out the extent to which we have lost our connection to the natural through the loss of the power of the imagination to transform and infuse the real. This is the sense in which we have, as Wordsworth says, "given our hearts away," for our loss of imaginative connection to reality leaves us bereft of a home in the natural world.

There is a further sense in which this rejection of the value of imagination has ontological consequences, for the imagination acts not only as a kind of mediating force between the self and the world, but also within the self, as a means by which we create our own narrative of being. We are not simply machines constructed from our experiences, as empiricists would have it, nor are we framed through rational analysis of ideas, as the rationalists would argue. We are, in large part, an imaginative construct, a story that we tell ourselves by which we fuse the disparate parts of our experience, and by so doing create our identities. The telos of being is the power of imagination to shape our ends, to draw us towards some further development, some deeper understanding of a "self" which is in part given by experience, in part by reason, in part by the shaping power of imagination. In Descartes' metaphysic, all that one is left with is the experience of his/her own being, and that experience is mediated only by the consciousness of Being itself, a closed ontological loop in which imagination, feeling and sensation play no part. This is the price that Descartes will pay for certainty. Reason is elevated to its place as the preeminent human faculty because it and only it can provide grounds for certainty. All other human intellectual faculties must be sacrificed, for they are not trustworthy; indeed, they are the grounds for deception. Reason is

decontextualized from time and from space, set free, epistemologically, but at the cost of meaning.

By dismissing the ontic logos, in which meaning is inherent in the universe, Descartes fixes the centre not only of epistemology, but of ethics as well, in the core of the human will. Descartes claims that he can have no knowledge of the outside world save through the ideas which he experiences within himself. This is the basis for a representational view of reality, one in which one can know the world with certainty if one can have “clear and distinct ideas” (to borrow Descartes’ own terminology) about the outside world, which I experience as the only “reality” within the self. But of course this is entirely problematic. It assumes that it is possible to represent the nature of the real within the mind, that the connections that exist in the external can be mirrored by the psychological, so that “evidence” drawn from the experience can be suitably, and without distortion, replicated as models to be captured within a kind of “mind’s eye,” a notion which Hume will undermine with his analysis of induction.

Descartes’ solution, of course, involves the concept of dualism, in which both the body and the “soul” have a part to play in the construction of our understanding of the world. But according to White (1990, p. 20-21), Descartes gives primacy to the understanding over the imagination, because while the understanding itself is sufficient for producing knowledge, imagination must rely upon understanding, and is therefore cast in the role of an ancillary attribute of mind. According to White, the imagination is linked to the corporeal because of the link to imagery, which is derived from sensory experience. White argues that for Descartes, to imagine is to have an image. This implies, of course, that the imagination be relegated to the realm of the corporeal, and thus has little importance for the formation of truth, which relies upon reason.

Schouls ( 2000), however, argues that Descartes in fact was much more aware of the problem concerning the nature of the image than philosophers have heretofore understood. He quotes Descartes' response to Hobbes' objection to the *Third Meditation*, in which Descartes points out that we can form no image of God, but can only know Him as an idea. Descartes responds to Hobbes by saying

Here my critic wants the term 'idea' to be taken to refer simply to the images of material things which are depicted in the corporeal imagination; and if this is granted, it is easy for him to prove that there can be no proper idea of an angel or of God. But I make it quite clear in several places . . . that I am taking the word 'idea' to refer to whatever is immediately perceived by the mind (quoted in Schouls, p. 48).

This is an extremely important point because of how it reflects upon our modern conceptions of positivism, and the split between mind and body which is supposed to owe its inception to Cartesian dualism. It is true that in creating a mind-body split, Descartes did much to give us a modern notion of the intellect as a disembodied entity, representing reality through images which must be transformed through the understanding in order to become real knowledge. But if the imagination can be present in both the corporeal realm in the form of images, as well as in the intellect in a non-imagistic form, as cognitive imagination, then it can act as a bridge between the two realms, and re-connect us to the world. This is the point which is inherent in Descartes' work, but which he never acknowledges explicitly, according to Schouls. But if Descartes implicitly understood that the imagination must play a role in hypothesis formation, then the imagination is therefore essential for scientific understanding.

In fact, this points to the possibility that the antinomies that seemed to result from the Hellenic period are in some ways a false dichotomy. Perhaps the separation of imagination from reason is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of the mind itself, and its relationship to the external world. If Plato "got it wrong from the beginning" in separating the imagination from our reasoning, and

assigning it a lesser role in knowledge formation, then much of the division that has haunted Western thought, ironically perhaps also making it so creative, is itself a kind of conceptual error. As we shall see when we get to the modern era, this reconciliation is now not just possible, but perhaps necessary.

Descartes' attempt to create a methodological means of acquiring certainty, and by so doing restore stability to the world, however, seemed to require the sacrifice of the imagination, and its attendant emotional connections, and led to an implicit reconceptualizing of the nature of reason itself. The imagination seems to have become associated, as it had in Plato's conception, with the mundane world, the world of the particular, not the universal. It is linked to sensuality, to potentially sinful carnal pleasures, and so must be suppressed if people were to achieve their ultimate salvation through purity. The openness and tolerance of the Humanists would have to be rejected if that kind of path to salvation were to remain open. And so the imagination is relegated to a lower role in epistemology once again, as once again Western philosophy looked for certainty in the face of political and philosophic chaos. This is the basis upon which the later Enlightenment thinkers must frame their epistemologies, ones founded on the search for absolute truth. The work of Newton did much to support this movement, for he seemed to offer a means by which absolute knowledge of the world, combining empiricism and mathematics, could be found. One way of thinking about the Enlightenment is to see it as the working out of the ideas implicit in Descartes' epistemological conception of the primacy of reason, and the necessity for certainty in human knowledge, combined with the methodology of Newton, which seemed to promise a process by which knowledge of the physical realm could be obtained. Enlightenment conceptions of the imagination and its role in epistemology, however, were far more nuanced than Descartes', for in seeking to describe the

connection between the knower and the known, it became impossible to ignore the role of the imagination.

## **2.5: The Enlightenment**

By the time of the Enlightenment, the notion of Cosmopolis had been firmly established in Western thought, and was founded on the primacy of reason. The Divine System of Nature (as Toulmin describes it) seemed to support the Enlightenment project of harmonizing the world of human beings with the natural laws of nature. All that was required was to work out these laws, and to make the modern state conform to them in the manner in which it handled its bureaucratic and political functions. But there was a fly in the ointment. The Encycopedists in France, and thinkers such as Rousseau, began to question the connection between the role of reason and the fact of the emotions in dictating the state of the human mind. How were we to reconcile our emotional needs with the necessity for reasonable behaviour? And if our emotions are connected to our imaginations, how can the imagination be made to fit within this rational ordering of the universe? In her discussion of these issues, Mary Warnock (1976) traces the way in which imagination was reconceived during the Enlightenment period by thinkers such as Hume and Kant. The following discussion owes much to Warnock, because I find her text to be focussed on many of the themes in which I am interested.

David Hume and Emmanuel Kant represent the next essential steps in the development in our understanding of the imagination, because of the manner in which each attempted to reconcile the role of the imagination with reason and perception. Hume's notions of imagination are founded on an Empiricist tradition which included the work of Locke and Berkeley. Even though not considered by

most as an Empiricist, Descartes had begun this empirical approach by first asking the question "What are we aware of?" i.e., what are the contents of our consciousness, and how are those contents formed? One of the questions that arises is how we are to understand the relationship between what is in the mind and what is outside of it: how do ideas arise in the mind, and how are they related to the external world? The contents of consciousness are not unproblematic, for although I seem to be examining the outside world, in fact I am aware only of my own perceptions of that world. Locke had dissolved this distinction in one sense by claiming that what I perceive are ideas, and that having perceptions and having ideas are the same thing. All consciousness is considered to be a bundle of ideas, both perception of the outside world and thoughts about that world. Locke introduced the idea of primary and secondary qualities to support this notion, primary qualities belonging to the object, and secondary qualities being those aspects of the object which I can actually experience. Berkeley argued that the distinction between primary and secondary qualities was insupportable, particularly for an Empiricist, and thus created the problem which most modern theories of truth and meaning cannot resolve, the problem of the representation of the external world in internal states of mind.

Hume begins with this tradition drawn from the Empiricists, but makes at least one distinction. He claims that what we are aware of in perception is an "impression" while what we are aware of in thought is an "idea". For Hume this distinction is merely a matter of degree and not of kind because impressions, including sensory input, emotions and passions, differ from ideas only in being more forceful. Ideas are thought to be the faint images of impressions in thinking and reasoning. Ideas are images, which are tied to the notion of the imagination as the image-making faculty. Having ideas is dependent upon the imagination, so that knowledge and imagination are linked in a fundamental manner in the seat of

consciousness itself. For Hume, the imagination is what allows us to have ideas in the first place. It allows us to “reproduce, separate, rearrange, and join ideas according to three general principles -- resemblance, contiguity in time and space, and cause and effect” (Banwart, p. 36). Imagination thus allows for the creation of abstract ideas from particular experiences. But while the impressions which give rise to ideas act to “tie down” the ideas to their originating impressions in memory, the imagination is free from this restraint. Thus the “fancy” can operate in a manner that allows for the contemplation of future states. Hume, then, attempts to define imagination in such a way that it is linked to both the reproductive ability, the capacity to represent the outside world in the mind's eye, as well as the productive ability, the capacity to create new things as objects of mental contemplation. Here the imagination is being utilized to resolve the dichotomy inherent in Descartes' mind-body duality. It is as if Hume is attempting to reconcile the Platonic notion of Forms with the Aristotelian focus on the particularities of concrete existence, with imagination acting as a kind of mediating influence.

There is another aspect of Hume's thought, however, which is central to our understanding of the historical evolution of the notion of reason itself. Hume's analysis of empiricism led him to the conclusion that we can never be certain of the results of our empirical investigations, that human science itself was ultimately only probabilistic, not absolute. This is a consequence of his critique of the principle of induction which, as he showed, is itself based upon induction, and is therefore a tautology. With this analysis, Hume undercuts Descartes' assumption that a representational theory of epistemology is possible. Hume reversed Plato's notion that all perceptions are faint copies of ideas to argue that all ideas are faint copies of perceptions, with imagination as the mediating influence. From this perspective, imagination makes knowledge possible, but not certain.

Hume then hands to Kant what appears to be another set of paradoxes: how can science give us absolute knowledge of the world if we can never trust the very basis upon which scientific knowledge is formed; and how can we have free will if science is correct in arguing that all actions are determined by natural law? Both of these problems threaten to undermine the assumptions underlying the notion of Cosmopolis itself, for they threaten the assumption that the natural world and human nature can be reconciled. In order to answer these problems, Kant must reinvestigate the very nature of knowledge formation, including the role of the imagination.

For Kant the function of the imagination is prior to knowledge. While Hume felt that through habit alone we are able to determine that an object such as a "cat" belongs to a set or category, for Kant, the fact that we are able to tell that the cat represents the same object that we had previously experienced also requires that we are able to create a mental set and place the cat within it. The senses alone might give us a set of impressions that could be reported out as a series of experiences (a situation which was, for Hume, at least theoretically possible), while for Kant, the imagination is so involved with the act of perception itself that in fact our consciousness could never actually experience such a set of disconnected sensations. Empirical imagination is thought of as being involved with particular cases from our own experiences. For example, someone who has experienced a particular kind of shrub will be able to identify not only the particular one with which he is familiar, but will be able to see that others of the same type belong to the same category. His/her imagination allows him/her to have knowledge not only of the particular case, but with the general concept. Kant holds that people are able to identify objects as being of a certain type through the empirical function of the imagination, which operates on the basis of being able to form images. This image-making facility also allows us to identify the object through time as being the

same type of thing, while belonging to a general set of similar objects. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, building upon this basis of the role of the imagination in knowledge formation, Kant is able to infer the existence of two absolute categories: space and time. If the category of space exists independently of experience, (time being a category necessary for experiences to occur), then Hume's critique fails, because the human mind itself contains the necessary framework into which ideas can be slotted. The mind does not conform to the elements of perception; rather, elements of perception conform to the human mind. Here Kant has reconciled, at least in theory, both the rationalists and the empiricists' notions of epistemology, and rescued certainty from the ash heap of philosophic history.

In contrast to the empirical imagination which was reproductive of experience, the transcendental imagination was thought to be essential for creative power, consciousness and thought. Transcendental imagination imposes an order upon experience, and in so doing, creates the grounds for a "transcendental unity of consciousness" (Tierney, p. 33). Kant discusses this notion in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and relates the productive and reproductive functions of the imagination to aesthetics in the *Critique of Judgment*. By creating the notion of the "transcendental imagination", Kant had laid the groundwork for the Romantics, who redefined the nature of the imagination in a way that gave it a role in knowledge formation once again.

By the end of the Enlightenment period, thinkers such as Hume and Kant had done much to harmonize the role of the imagination in understanding with that played by reason. But there still appeared to be something missing. The Romantics were to reexamine the nature of the imagination, and in so doing, introduce another element, the darker side of the imagination as a potentially destabilizing influence, as well as its role not only in mirroring the natural world, but

in fact, to use Abrams' phrase, to use imagination as a lamp to cast a light upon nature .

## **2.6: Romantic epistemology: the aesthetic imagination**

The stability which Enlightenment thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, Hume and Kant had attempted to formulate through the application of reason to all facets of the human condition began to fragment with the French revolution, itself presaged by the work of earlier thinkers such as Rousseau. Initially this transformation in political and social life was greeted with great optimism by Romantic thinkers such as Wordsworth and Coleridge. But as the revolution descended into The Terror, many Romantic thinkers were forced to reevaluate their notions of the relationship between reason and imagination, sometimes conceived of as the distinction between order and chaos. Toulmin describes Romanticism as rationalism's mirror-image, in that rather than rejecting rationality, it sought to reconcile it to the imagination, but in a different manner than Enlightenment thinkers.

These ideas of the connection between the aesthetic and the epistemological are further developed, for example, when we examine the artistic theories of Coleridge. The impulse in Coleridge seems to have been to link his metaphysical speculations about nature with a theory of human nature and psychology, all through the power of the imagination. For Coleridge, as for many before him, the shaping power of the imagination was its ability to take a sensory perception and turn it into an idea. Imagination has two powers: to shape by means of this power, and to cause us to feel. Feeling itself became important for the Romantics because, as Wordsworth claimed in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), poetry itself is not simply an expression of reason, as the writers of the Enlightenment may

have believed, but of “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.” This aesthetic places the focus of poetic power not in the mirroring of the outer world, but as part of the power of the poet to transform that outer reality through an expression of his inner understanding. The poet’s private imaginative vision was opposed to the outer world of public experience.

The notion is that the poet can give certain ideas or forms his own feelings which become universal through their connection to the symbols used. In our response to these ideas we ourselves must in some sense recreate them -- the symbols of the poet evoke in us that same power of the imagination. These powers are the combining powers of the imagination, the power to see “the all in each,” how everything is connected to and part of everything else. From this perspective, every individual thing is not only a particular manifestation, but a symbol of some universal underlying all things. Thus the more mature Romantic understanding in essence attempted to reconcile the Platonic notion of the universal with the Aristotelian focus on the particular.

From this perspective, imagination has the power to conjure an image, to make us see the universal in the particular, and to make us feel strongly both about the particular thing as well as the universal idea for which it is a symbol:

To enable us to see images of individual forms of things as universally significant; to enable us to see in the same way objects in the world before us as of more than particular significance, and by the same process to cause us to feel both love and fear, this seems to be the function of the imagination (Warnock, p. 83).

Here the imagination is conceived of as an active power which does more than simply respond to the ideas that are similar or which are associated. It seems to have the power of actively combining ideas to create new ideas, and by doing so, be truly creative. The function of the imagination is to treat the objects of sense as symbolic, to see in them a meaning beyond that particular manifestation. Here the

imagination is associated with the political ideal of freedom. The determinism of the Newtonian universe had left little room for free will, and the problem that the church had foreseen in the doctrine of materialism, the same problems with which Descartes had tried to deal, now manifests itself in the realm of politics. Just as the French Revolution had begun as an attempt to throw off the oppressive shackles of authoritarianism of both church and monarchy, so Romanticism sought in the imagination the power to transform the world through poetic genius, a genius often isolated and alienated from the society which it critiques through its private vision of reality.

Abrams comments that:

In some writers, this concept of the imaginative recreation of the old earth into a new earth is still expressed in the original biblical metaphor of a marriage -- although now it is not a marriage of the New Jerusalem with the Lamb, but a reintegration of man's inner faculties into spiritual unity, or else a marriage between man's mind and the external world (1968, p. 1209).

This raises the question of the nature of the relationship between mind and nature which since the time of Descartes had been moving towards a view that the mind is distinct from nature, that the objects of our perceptions are separate from the mind that observes them. The medieval view had been that the mind acts upon the objects of nature to make them meaningful, that is, the mind acted upon its sensory perceptions and in so doing imbued sensation with meaning. The church had feared that the pursuit of natural knowledge was dangerous because it would cause an inevitable separation of humanity from nature, would turn the world into a collection of discrete objects bound by no particular meaning to the world of human beings. The way in which Coleridge describes the imagination seems to provide another means by which people are tied back into nature: nature does not exist as a thing in itself, but only in relationship to our experience of it, and that experience

must be mediated by the imagination, which takes individual sensory impressions and melds them into one experience of the world. A philosopher who wishes to deal with the imagination must therefore take into account perception and knowledge as part of his/her interest, and will ultimately have to create a theory of the self and of mind, true not just of his/her "self", but of self as a universal construct. His/her study will be not just of the empirical, but of the transcendental, that which must be true in order for selves to exist. It is a theory which attempts to reunite the self with the natural order through a process which looks *through* the phenomena of nature to glimpse the mysteries beyond. Writing of the growth of expressivism during the Romantic age, Charles Taylor writes:

The 'meaning' of natural phenomena as they resonate within us reflects a meaning really expressed in them, by God, or a world spirit . . . so Coleridge could say, "In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking . . . I seem to be seeking, as it were *asking*, a symbolic language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing anything new." And Wordsworth: "I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with everything that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature (1989. p. 301).

Following this notion of meaning as being a connection between the world of nature and the inner self, Coleridge makes several distinctions in his concept of the imagination. The first is to define the imagination as being either primary or secondary. The primary imagination is the "living power and prime agent in all perception and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM." The secondary imagination he defines as being like the primary, but "coexisting with the conscious will, yet as still identical to the primary in the kind of its agency . . . it dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate . . . It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are fixed and dead" (Warnock, p.

91). Like Kant, Coleridge held that the primary imagination played a role in our perception of the world, and was therefore essential to all knowledge. Like Schelling, on the other hand, Coleridge held that the primary imagination is not simply recreating the world (as Kant might have it), but actually constitutes what the world is, in other words, Idealism.

Imagination is therefore divided into two types: the reproductive and the poetic. The function of the secondary or poetic imagination is to make *one thing* out of the disparate elements presented to consciousness, rather than simply recreating those elements in one form. The distinction here seems to be between creating a picture of the world as a unified given to perception on the one hand, and recombining the elements in memory to create something new, something that is in a sense representative of the whole, on the other. Further, this re-represented whole is of symbolic importance, for it stands for the universal. The imagination is able to accomplish this by means of extracting the essence of the experiences that are particular in memory, to make a representative image which symbolically stands for the experience itself as a thing. Here the particular is represented by the image, which symbolically then represents the idea, or essence of the thing.

The next distinction which Coleridge worked with is that which applies to the manner in which the imagination operates to mediate between reason and understanding. The understanding is that which informs our grasp of concepts in science, for example. It is the capacity by which we acquire factual knowledge of the world. Reason, on the other hand, is that which operates on the level of ideas. For Kant, these ideas are beyond our grasp; they are regulative, but not part of the understanding. They are what allows the understanding itself to operate. For Coleridge, in distinction, ideas lie behind all of the forms of nature. It is what the Romantic consciousness strives towards through experience. For Coleridge, ideas are constitutive of nature: they are part of it, just as they constitute our minds.

## 2.7: Our Story so far. . .

So far in this chapter I have attempted to briefly trace the manner in which the imagination has been conceived as a necessary handmaiden to the other powers of the intellect, particularly as this relationship applies to epistemological issues. I have also briefly sketched a notion of the historical embeddedness of these ideas. In particular, I have been interested in the manner in which dichotomies, or antinomies, in Hellenic thought, seem to resonate through the centuries, finding new expression in various ideas. These ideas often involve rethinking the connection between the imagination and our power of reason.

Plato rejects imagination's role in knowledge formation, and raises suspicions about its value, even while employing its imagistic and metaphoric power in his own explanations. Aristotle rejects imagination's role in true understanding, while seeming to accept its capacity to form images which reason can contemplate in pursuing knowledge. He relegates imagination's primary function to art, wherein it has its greatest efficacy. It is at least arguable that Descartes implicitly accepts the role of imagination in forming hypotheses, and even attempts to separate the power to form images from the notion of ideas, thus accepting the role of imagination in a form other than corporeal image formation. The dichotomy in function which he creates in walking the metaphysical line between Empiricism and Idealism is unstable, however, and Hume attempts to overcome this problem by dealing with imagination in two ways: as a necessary means of forming images of the external world, as well as necessary for our aesthetic and ethical understanding. Kant's compromise between the necessity for empirical knowledge, with the forms of the intellect inherent in Rationalist epistemology, seems to have allowed him to make a more subtle distinction

between the reproductive and productive power of the imagination, and thereby opened the door to the Romantic epistemology of Coleridge. The imagination then becomes relegated to the artistic realm, and an aesthetic approach to epistemology as necessarily involving imaginative transformation of the given was left to the Romantic tradition.

This is the legacy with which modern notions of epistemology, art, and ethics must deal, a separation between the reductionist/objectivist sciences on the one hand, and the holistic/subjectivist sciences on the other. The reconciliation of these two ways of knowing, and of working out the role of the imagination in human understanding, would have to await the freeing of imagination itself from the constricting role that it had played in previous conceptions of knowledge formation as part of our Cartesian heritage. Before that reconciliation could take place, however, old notions of the relationship between the imagination and its role in image making and perception would have to be challenged.

## **2.7 Phenomenology and the imagination**

We have seen that the confusion of imagination with the power of imaging, and with the notion of “idea” has been problematic. After examining the problems associated with thinking of the imagination in terms only of imagining, White (1990) says that “To imagine something is to *think of* it as possibly being so” (his emphasis, p. 184). In other words, although not dismissing the notion of imaging as useful in imagination, White does reject it as being either a necessary or sufficient condition for imagination, preferring to focus on the hypothecating aspect, i.e.: the power to imagine other possibilities. Imagination is not a separate faculty of the mind, nor does it require the capacity to picture a state of affairs, although such images may attend speculation. Nor is it necessary to conceive of the

imagination as essential for our perception of the external world. This leads to the notion of the "death of the image," as we find in both Mary Warnock and Alan White's discussions of a phenomenological approach to the imagination when they examine the work of Brentano, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Ryle, and Wittgenstein. The work of these thinkers has done much to break the epistemological "log jam" that has prevented the reconciliation between the imagination and epistemology since the time of Plato.

Warnock begins by examining the notion of the mental image as it is analyzed in phenomenology. Brentano defined mental activity as that which is directed towards an object. A thought is necessarily about something, a feeling is a feeling about something. For Brentano, if I perceive something, there are only two items involved: me as the perceiver, and the thing perceived. If I imagine something, there are only two things involved: the thing, and me. In neither case, that of perceiving or imagining, do I need to consider the image. Husserl's phenomenology differs from Brentano's in being more complex, and in extending the idea of intentionality further to include the notion that when I perceive something, I not only direct my intention towards the thing, but I also discover meaning in it. The object itself is the same for all observers, but as it is meant it may differ from one person to the next. This points to the notion that meaning exists because of its connection to background, and background is similar, but also different, from person to person. The object itself, which creates these various meanings in different perceivers, is transcendent to all particular meanings.

To arrive at this position Husserl used the method of phenomenological reduction. This method operates by eliminating all presuppositions which attend any object in order to reduce it to merely that which is perceived. The notion is that if one can reduce the object to merely that which is immediately perceived, then one can isolate that which is given by the object as it is. According to Husserl,

when one does this, the object yet points to something of universal significance beyond itself. We may eliminate all of our generalizations about the object, yet it maintains a connection to general meanings in spite of the reduction. By this claim Husserl is arguing that we cannot find any pure experience which does not have a general significance beyond itself.

This notion of the relationship between perception and meaning is therefore different from both Hume and Kant, for there is no mediating object which allows the connection between the momentary perception and some more universal category. The problem of creating the category itself disappears, for it is somehow implicit in the thing as perceived. The thing as perceived itself instantiates a concept. For example, in perceiving the colour green, I am immediately in full possession of what "greenness" is. No further consideration need apply here, for the experience of green and the concept are one and the same. Imagination is therefore not required to make the connection for us, and thus the reproductive faculty of the imagination appears to have been done away with. Each momentary experience of the thing is not considered in isolation, but is connected to the entire perception. Hearing a note of music does not require that I mentally connect it to other notes. Hume had supposed that my memory somehow allows me to create a category which transcends time and allows me to recognize the thing. Instead, every second of perception "points to" the entire note as it is sustained in time. Kant would agree that this is what we perceive, but he maintains that it is the function of the imagination to make this possible. Husserl argues that this is simply part of what it means to experience something, and needs no act of the imagination to explain it.

One way to consider these issues is to reexamine the notion that there is a gap between the thing perceived and the thing as experienced. Both Hume and Kant do so by invoking the imagination as the faculty which bridges the gap

between them. Merleau-Ponty attacks this notion by arguing against Hume's assumption that we must find a method by which we recognize the similarities between perceptions. Merleau-Ponty instead points out that we cannot perceive something unless it already has significance for us: "The sensations and images which should be at the beginning and end of all knowledge never make their appearance anywhere other than within a horizon of meaning, and the significance of the precept, far from resulting from an association, is in fact presupposed in all association" (*The Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 15). This response effectively dismisses the Humean view of how the imagination works to allow for the creation of abstract concepts from particular experiences.

Merleau-Ponty then turns to an examination of Kant's notion of the a priori. Kant's view differs from Hume's in that Kant held that in order for the mind to perceive an object it must utilize various a priori categories which the imagination then uses unconsciously to connect the perception to another which is similar. Similarities are not discovered, as in the Humean view, but are part of the way in which the mind itself must work. Merleau-Ponty denies that the mind has an internal form which it imposes upon the world in such a way that the world becomes intelligible; instead, he claims that the world and the mind are in fact identical in their form in a way that makes the connection natural, rather than a Kantian imposition of form upon content. We are bodies in a world of bodies, and therefore part of the world itself. We do not impose, for example, the notion of space upon an object seen at a distance, so that it is the object plus the category of space which forms my consciousness; instead, "because as the primordial contact with being, as the assumption by the sentient subject of a form of existence to which the sensible points, and as the coexistence of sentient and sensible, it itself constitutes a setting for coexistence, in other words, space" (quoted in Warnock, p.

221). Sensation, according to Warnock's interpretation of Merleau-Ponty, is one of the surfaces of contact with being, a structure of consciousness itself.

One is reminded here of the work of Mark Johnson (1987), whose concept of the metaphoric development of somatic understanding is central to a new epistemological conception of meaning. From this perspective, our being itself is constructed from our experiences of the world in a very primitive and preconscious way, and our sensations therefore conform to our concepts without the intervention of any necessary use of the imagination as conceived of by Hume and Kant. Merleau-Ponty thus claims that I need no special knowledge or faculty to allow me to accept the existence of things beyond the way in which I perceive them. The Humean question of how I associate things in the world with my mental perceptions disintegrates. The world needs no explanation for its existence as perceived, and therefore the imagination as conceived of in this manner is not required. We cannot ask how the world would look if some other faculty than sense could perceive it; the question itself is meaningless. Perception is necessarily thought-imbued.

But what is the nature of the mental image itself? Ryle (1966) argues that although I may imagine that I am having a certain type of experience, for example when I have a fantasy, it does not follow that I am in fact having an experience of a real thing. This distinguishes Ryle from Hume, for Hume believed that hearing a real sound and imagining a sound heard were really the same kind of phenomena, only that the imagined sound was fainter than the real one. Ryle argues that I am not having an auditory experience at all, and that therefore the two cannot be compared. For Ryle, because we so often depend upon our visual perception, believing that imagination works best through visual images seems obvious, but is misleading. When we compare a picture of a dog to a real dog, then there are two things, the dog and the picture. But neither a memory of a dog nor an imagined dog

can be compared to a real one, claims Ryle. Memories and imagination do not necessarily copy objects in the real world.

Wittgenstein argues that we do not understand the imagination by describing the pictures that are conjured in the mind's eye whenever we imagine. According to Wittgenstein, when I want to examine the notion of the imagination I need to ask how the word is used. He wishes to ask how the image in my mind is related to the object which it supposedly represents. In contrast, Sartre examines the imagination by analyzing it in terms of what it describes using the phenomenological method: "We shall produce images, reflect on them, describe them. That is, we shall attempt to determine and to classify their distinctive characteristics . . ." (Warnock, p. 160). From this method Sartre attempts to describe the knowledge which he can obtain from this method. He will attempt to move from what is certain about the act of imagining to what is merely probable. Unfortunately, he does not distinguish between the two cases very well. He cannot escape the theory-laden nature of describing imagery or the imagination. Sartre finds, like Ryle, that he is unable to determine exactly what it is that he is attempting to describe. In looking at a portrait of a man, for example, we can see it as either the man, or as a picture. We can move back and forth in our way of responding to the thing. But does that same distinction apply to a mental representation? In other words, it is impossible to describe a mental image as a thing in itself -- it is always an image of something, and that something always remains latent in the image. The important point here is that the images of the imagination are always participating in concepts or background information: there is no such thing as the immaculate image.

Sartre then describes some basic features of the imagination: first, it is a form of consciousness, a way of thinking about things. Secondly, the image can contain nothing except what we already know; unlike the perception of a page,

which I can read, the mental image of a page contains nothing except what I already know. Because of this, the image is always distinguishable from the thing that it represents. Finally, imagination is active, not passive. When I perceive objects in the external world, I receive the image without effort. But the images of the imagination always require my effort to be created. The image is not a thing, but an analogue, a manner of helping me represent something that exists in objective reality.

The images of the imagination seem to convey a feeling about the thing being imagined, a feeling that the image somehow represents not only the actual physical characteristics of the thing, but in some sense its meaning as well. This notion of *seeing-as* is central to the idea of how imagery comes to be meaningful:

If we are successfully imagining something then, this is what we are doing: either by means of physical or nonphysical analogues we are calling up the sense or significance of something which is not present to us in fact. It is for us affectively as if the absent object were present (Warnock, p. 171).

In her discussion of Sartre, Warnock claims that we cannot speak of imagining without also speaking of images, that images are the very stuff of the imagination.

We must now turn to the larger question of what the imagination itself entails, apart from the analysis of the notion of image. Warnock critiques Sartre's notion further, and ends by concluding that "imagination is what we use in interpreting our present experience in the light of past and future experience" (p. 179). The imagination presents to our minds images from memory which contain a residue from other experiences. In a sense, then, imagination helps us to form a consistent and coherent set of experiences by tying them together through time. But this entails that imagination is still subject to certain constraints, that is, those imposed by past experiences.

Sartre wished to deny this aspect of the imagination precisely because he wished to maintain the hope of human freedom as being possible through the operation of the imagination, and this does remain an important issue. If Associationism (the notion that we form our ideas through their connection to other ideas, so that some ideas are ineluctably tied to others) is correct, then imagination is limited in its potential to create new knowledge. If the imagination can operate to go beyond the given, however, then it can generate new ideas, and human freedom becomes meaningful. Human beings need to be able to present to themselves the nonexistent, and know it to be such. For Sartre, the imagination is therefore essential for human freedom. Humans are metaphysically the only things in the world capable of knowing the nonexistent, and therefore of being free from the determined. Our consciousness of freedom requires the capacity to imagine. Freedom of action and freedom of the imagination are the same thing, because we can always choose to do something which is not determined by the situation, but by our own imagination of a different possibility.

The question with which we are left is whether it is necessary to see the use of the imagination as being the same in perception as it is in utilizing the mind's eye. Is there a continuum on which both of these uses of the imagination fit, or is imagination a term to be saved for the notion of mental imagining only? Warnock argued that there is a progression from seeing, interpreting our perceptions, seeing them as linked to a general class, and using symbols to suggest meaning to ourselves and others. Seeing-as is the manner in which this takes place. When we confront images such as the duck-rabbit, we cannot separate out our perception of the thing from our interpretation, because the interpretation drives how it is perceived in the first place.

In *Mindsight* (2004), McGinn examines the implications of this notion of the implicit connection between seeing-as and the imagination in terms of meaning

formation by arguing that this kind of seeing-as applies not only to objects of sensory perception, but to linguistic understanding as well. When we read a sentence, we are unable to separate out our perception of the words on the page with our understanding of their meaning, and this connection entails an act of imagination. In fact, McGinn argues that without this kind of imaginative interplay between the possibilities inherent in a sentence, meaning itself would not be possible:

. . . there does seem to be a good sense in which understanding is an *ability*. In the case of meaning, it is the ability to imagine the relevant possibility. Without this ability understanding would not be possible, since we need a way to represent alternatives to the actual. I think this ability is *intrinsic* to understanding in a way that other abilities are not . . . (p. 153).

This notion of the interplay between the given nature of a text and its fictive possibilities is also raised by Dennis Sumara in *Private Readings in Public* (1996) in which he argues that it is the indeterminacy of the fictive text that in some sense makes it meaningful. The fiction itself seems to invite the reader into the world created through its representation of the real, but then disrupts that representation through the manner in which the elements of the fiction are presented, for this world is both real and not-real simultaneously. The reader himself/herself is a necessary element in the meaning making process here, for this disruption can only be reconciled in the mind of the reader. This notion of a disruption in the space created by fiction is what can be considered the aesthetic response to a work of literature. Sumara argues that “when the fictive nature of the text is unmasked, and the reader understands that she or he must work to overcome indeterminacy that has been conditioned by the author, the imagination is invoked” (1996, p. 37). From this perspective, the nature of the literary cannot be found within an analysis of some aspect of the text, of the author’s intentions, or within the reader, but only within an interplay of elements, an interplay that depends upon the imagination as

a kind of intermediating agency. In the end, we are reduced to saying that thought and perceiving are so far intermingled that one cannot conceive of thought without reference to perception, or perception as distinct from thought. Imagination must play a role in all cases of perception, not just in the reproductive sense.

This then opens the door to the possibility that all forms of understanding are meaning-imbued, and to the role of the imagination in constructing meaning. In order to investigate this possibility, I shall examine the nature of the imagination from another, parallel perspective in Western thought: the use of the imagination as a psychological tool. Interestingly, this focus on the psychological basis of the imagination, which will overlap with the philosophic analysis, leads to a very similar conclusion: the importance of narrative as a means of structuring experience and our understanding of it, a role which places the imagination in the centre of our epistemological and educational concerns.

## Chapter Three: The Anthropology of the Imagination

### 3.1: Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss some of the main concepts that provide the framework for an imaginative approach to education as involving cognitive tools. I have already discussed the philosophic context which informs much of our understanding of the imagination and its role in knowledge formation. Here I am interested in providing a kind of parallel set of concepts, some of which overlap with my previous discussion, which gives another view of how the imagination functions. In particular, I am interested in showing how imagination is central to the notion of meaning-making psychologically, as well as philosophically. In order to address the issue of how such imaginative meaning-making can function, it is necessary to discuss the genesis of literacy as it occurred historically in order to understand how the journey of the modern student recapitulates this odyssey in meaning-making.

According to Egan, one way of conceiving of education consists in the acquisition by each generation of those cognitive tools that have been developed historically in a culture. In particular, it is the question of how a student moves from orality to literacy that is of central concern here. I am interested in examining the cognitive developments that literacy entails, particularly as it offers cognitive tools which differ from those available to the oral consciousness. I shall begin by discussing the theories of a number of writers who examine the nature of preliterate consciousness. Ernst Cassirer, for example, examines the role of language in the formation of the mythopoetic consciousness, and discusses the relationship which may exist between thought and language itself, particularly how language is influenced by metaphor as a means of expression. Claude Levi-Strauss, and Eric Havelock help us understand the nature of the epistemology and the ontology of mythopoetic consciousness, and lead into a discussion of how that

consciousness is transformed into a literate one. Walter Ong, Jack Goody, and David Olson further develop these concepts by considering the relationship between oral versus literate modes of thought, outlining the distinction in consciousness that grows as a consequence of literacy. After examining the historical roots of our understanding of the genesis of the literate mind, I shall then discuss some of the epistemological and ontological implications of this form of theorizing about literacy, based on the work of Mark Johnson, Hillary Putnam and others. I shall end this chapter by discussing the evolutionary context for our understanding of narrative provided by Merlin Donald.

### **3.2: Metaphor, Meaning, and the Mythopoetic Consciousness: from Somatic to Mythic Understanding**

One of the first people to examine the epistemological implications of myth making was Ernst Cassirer, whose seminal work *Language and Myth* (1946) raised the question of how the imagination and the emotions were implicated in the formation of human thought. Cassirer begins by claiming that logical and scientific thought are not simply part of our endowment as humans, but are rather an achievement of centuries of cultural evolution, an evolution which has its roots in metaphor and myth making as the primal modes of thought and expression. According to Cassirer, myth "never breaks out of the magic circle of its figurative ideas. It reaches religious and poetic heights; but the gulf between its conceptions and those of science never narrows the least bit. But language, born in that same magic circle, has the power to break its bounds" (Cassirer, 1946, p. ix). How language breaks those bounds, of course, is the question.

Cassirer begins by examining the connection between thought and conception, linking both to the formation of the mythopoetic consciousness. He does so in order to separate mytho-religious thought from "theoretical thinking",

i.e.; thought more like Western scientific thought. Here Cassirer seems to be forming the basis for an argument which distinguishes between literate and non-literate modes of consciousness. One issue is whether the distinction which he draws simply defines a difference in operation between the two modes, or whether some "abyss" exists which marks the two types of minds as fundamentally distinct. This issue raises the question in an ontological as well as epistemic manner, for the question now involves the way in which consciousness is created through language. Cassirer raises an essential question for any theory of mind: how is the concept of "class" or "category" created in order to be labeled?

Here Cassirer attempts to deal in a psychological manner with the same question that we saw being of concern to Hume and Kant: how do we account for the formation of the notion of a category? The common conception is that a class is so named through the perception of an identical set of characteristics shared by all members of the group: the "essence" is defined through an act both perceptual and cognitive. As Cassirer points out, however, the creation of such a general category which subsumes a list of characteristics which act to define the essence requires the creation of category names -- which means that language is prior to categorization. How do we cross the gap between the category name as an element of language, and the category named as an element of concept? Which comes first, the name, i.e. language; or the essence, i.e. act of conception? Cassirer writes: ". . . how can such a differentiation exist prior to language? Do we not *realize* them (categories) thoroughly by means of language, through the very act of naming them?" (Cassirer, 1946, p. 24). As Cassirer points out, the rule that determines how this act of naming occurs must lie prior to the notion of logic which underpins most epistemology, for epistemology which depends upon concept as prior to language presupposes the very thing it is to explain: how is it that language

"latches on to" the aspects of perception that have similar characteristics, such that a common category name can be applied?

Cassirer's argument then moves into examining the issue of how ideational synthesis leads to primary verbal concepts. As he points out, this is not only determined by the objective nature of the thing-in-itself (to use a Kantian term), but also by the question of how language places its stamp upon phenomena: What is the law that determines how language characterizes phenomena in the creation of categories? Cassirer asks whether that law is the same for religious, mythopoetic expression as for scientific, theoretical expression. The essential distinction here is that in theoretical discourse, language acts to break the datum free from the unity of perception, to isolate it and seek its defining characteristic. As a consequence, the logical mode of thought acts to see how the particular is subsumed under a general category, so that the thing-in-itself is simultaneously apprehended as a thing-in-relationship. In other words, the impulse here is to link particulars into greater and greater wholes, so that the One becomes the Many, and the Many in turn becomes a One, as the particular is positioned to the general category through its placing. The act of logical analysis is previous to, but necessary for an act of synthesis, one which unites the disparate welter of events into a unified whole. At the same time, this whole is appreciable through the apprehension of the fusion of the essences of each thing in its proper relation to the whole through logical mathematical laws: in other words, science. This may be seen as an unusually holistic conception of science, but I would argue that a view of the nature of scientific inquiry which only focuses on the analytic aspects of methodology does disservice to the ultimate aim of science itself: to bring the entire universe into one equation, a theory of everything that shows how each element is related to some larger whole.

Interestingly, the mind here must choose its focus; it resists the temptation to dwell on the particular, and instead moves on to the general, to the abstract. This act of moving from the particular to the general creates an entirely new ontological level, for the abstract takes on a meaning and existence beyond that of the particular, standing apart from and in some sense over it. From this perspective, the nominalist-essentialist debates are really about the metaphysical status of abstract categories: do they exist as Platonic Forms, or are they Aristotelian names for ideas only? But no matter how one characterizes the metaphysical nature of the abstract, the particular remains in its essence distinct. The "meaning" of the particular is conditioned by its relationship to the general, and the laws by which that connection is created and maintained. Here the sensory mode and the linguistic are fused into an ontological sense of meaning through the transition from the particular to the general: "By this process of running through a realm of experience, i.e.: of discursive thinking, the particular receives its fixed intellectual "meaning" and definite character . . . the place it holds in the totality of Being or rather the place the progressive march of thought assigns to it, determines its content and its theoretical significance" (Cassirer, 1946, p. 26).

As Cassirer points out, this higher level of abstract, theoretical thought cannot proceed unless it finds its existence upon a lower, more primal level. The act of naming must be prior to the act of conceptualizing in this sense, that "all theoretical cognition takes its departure from a world already pre-formed by language; the scientist, the historian, even the philosopher, lives with his objects only as language presents them to him" (Cassirer, 1946, p. 28) -- a view unlikely to be shared by the working scientist. Even historical thought, which seems to precede the philosophic mode itself, at least in this sense, must take as given the embeddedness of the particular in the general. Perhaps the historical mode is necessarily previous to the philosophic for this reason: that it helps create the

bridge between the particular and the general through a synthetic act, and paves the way for the philosophic mode to generalize the particular to the abstract as a function of the essence perceived. The particular participates in the general by “find(ing) those pregnant moments in the course of events where, as focal points, whole series of occurrences are epitomized” (Cassirer, 1946, p. 27).

Here the notion of *humanly* engaging the object perceived becomes of interest. In order for the human encountering the object to be able to perceive and categorize it, that is, for the object about to enter the realm of the known as opposed to the simply perceived, it must take on some essential quality, some attribute which can be named and thus given some character. Cassirer points to the notion of the mind as autonomous here to explain this characterization; the same word in different languages denotes not the same object, but the thing as apprehended by the activity of mind itself. According to Cassirer we are left in a paradoxical situation, for this notion of the inward form of language has to presuppose what it is intended to explain. Here is where he claims the mythic enters in, for it is in the mythic form of consciousness that a reconciliation is possible. In other words, this is how the mythopoetic form of naming phenomena differs from the scientific, which must be built from this lower strata. This is how mythopoetic consciousness acts in a manner previous to the logical, how it acts to “place its stamp upon phenomena.” The linguistic and the mythical can be combined into one category by considering how they stand apart from the logic of scientific rationality.

Cassirer evokes the notion here of the “temporary God,” that primitive response to powerful phenomena which acts to crystalize the thing-as-perceived on a sensory level into that-which-is-apprehended conceptually. The argument is psychological, in that the self or ego becomes fixated on a particular experience, and in so doing, creates the basis for mystical thought: “This focusing of all forces

on a single point is the prerequisite for all mystical thinking, and mythical formulation" (p. 33). But even Cassirer must stop here, for although he evokes the power of human emotion and the immediacy of experience, (as he says "then the spark jumps somehow across" (p. 33), he is unable to explain the exact manner in which this tie between human perception and conception occurs.

It seems to me that Cassirer's theory implicitly evokes the power of experience in and of itself to create the necessary leap from perception and conception, but ultimately fails to account for how that gap is crossed. If it were the case that the mind, perhaps through evolutionary pressure, has developed a biological capacity to form conceptual categories, and a linguistic ability to label them beyond the explanatory power of experience alone, then the problem is moved into an entirely different category, one open to neurological and genetic explanation. The mechanism by which categories are formed may be unconscious in nature. Cassirer's theory then becomes descriptive of certain stages in this process, but not useful as an explanation of the process itself. Indeed, there is evidence from linguistics, such as Chomsky's work in *Syntactic Structures* (1957), that children are able to handle grammatical rules in a manner that cannot be explained by reference to experience alone. They do not make the kind of mistakes that one might expect if they were merely making hypothesis without some innate structures to draw from. I will examine this possibility when I discuss the work of Johnson and Donald later in this chapter. Of course, even if we invoke some innatist theory, combined with Darwinian evolution, it does not help to explain how the first person acquired language, only how such a skill might be heritable thereafter. Nor does it explain the nature of language itself. The link between the linguistic and the mythopoetic, on the one hand, and the scientific on the other, might still arise, as might the problem of the link between the metaphysical status of the general category names to particulars. Here we might

be inclined to bring in more modern notions based on sociocultural theory, such as the work of Vygotsky, to describe and potentially explain how this mechanism works. The cognitive tools approach allows us to conceive of children acquiring the capacity to form categories as they acquire the tools developed by their culture, so that the problem is in one sense put on an historical and cultural basis, rather than an individual one.

Cassirer himself, however, invokes the notion of the "momentary god" hypothesis. After the initial emotional response, which is epitomized in an involuntary word or image in response to the immediacy of the "momentary god," has passed, the sound evoked by that emotion has become objective, an object which exists inside as well as outside of human consciousness. The gods become objectified by the same process, and take on an active character, while the process of objectification and language building continues. Myth is here made coexistent with the genesis of language itself. Interestingly, in speaking of ancient Roman religion, R.H. Barrow claims that "To the primitive Roman, *numen*, power, or will, resided everywhere, or rather it manifested itself everywhere by action" (Barrow, 1951, p.15). And how is Man to control this animistic power? "The first need was to fix this vague power in a way acceptable to it, and so to narrow the focus of its action. . . It was thought that to name its manifestation in individual phenomena gave definition to what was vague..." (Barrow, 1951, p. 15 ). One is reminded here of word magic, the power of ritual in mythic thought, the role of the Shaman in saying the magic words, the power of knowing the real names of things, a knowledge by which they could be controlled. Language has the power to unite the Self with the Cosmos, the mythic union between the One and the Many in which the Self both is and is not a particular.

In other words, language has been thought of as essentially tied to the nature of things in a deep way for much of human history. Cassirer's theory helps

us understand a mythic view of the world in terms of how pre-modern humans see existence as composed not just of things, but of actions -- actions which can be symbolized as mythical images embodying the category names of gods. Human experience here is posited as necessarily prior to our capacity to conceptualize it, to turn it into logical categories. The human mind is not presented with reality as a given, as a set of facts to be processed; instead, external reality is given shape through mythical images which help form the basis of the self as our inner experience becomes organized through language. As Cassirer says "Whatever appears important for our wishing and willing, our hope and anxiety, for acting and doing: that and only that receives the verbal stamp of "meaning"( Cassirer, 1946, p. 38).

What is interesting here is the notion that all thought must ultimately be based upon somatic experience, rather than upon the empiricists' tabula rasa or the cognitivists' innate categories or Kantian concepts. Language must be seen as founded on a prelinguistic basis of experience which is in itself unmediated by concept, but only organized by precept. This is a functional definition of language, in which its purpose is to act as a mediator between our internal states and the state of the world outside of us, rather than as a logical system of categorization based upon some characteristics which form conceptual units. The ultimate "episteme" of language is rooted in bodily awareness and perceptual acts which exist previous to consciousness, which is perhaps why theorizing meaning has proven to be so difficult, because meaning is not merely rational but emotional and somatic: it exists in a state which by its nature is more fundamental than the language acts which seek to describe it.

Cassirer further probes the nature of mythic language as distinct from scientific when he begins to investigate the nature of metaphor, which is often seen to be an early and debased form of conceptualization. The essential question here

is whether metaphor can be seen to be prior to myth, or as arising from it. His argument is that a temporal relationship misses the entire point: both myth and metaphor arise from a common root, a root that goes back to somatic understanding and his notion of "momentary gods". For Cassirer, logical concepts involve an ever-widening web of relationships which subsume one category to another in ever increasing levels of abstraction. Metaphoric and mythical thought, however, depend upon an intensification of experience to one single point which takes its meaning from its qualitative nature. Specific differences are extinguished by the process of semantic leveling, in which conceptual particulars are fused into wholes. In conceptual thought, each particular retains its identity even as it is set in its causal relationship to its supercategory. But in metaphoric and mythic thought, particulars are dissolved into a kind of cosmic unity in which one thing becomes symbolically representative of the whole itself, rather as any part of a hologram can be used to generate the entire picture. The fusion here of Self and Whole presupposes an entirely different relationship between epistemology and metaphysics as subsumed within the ontological, as opposed to standing somehow outside of and beyond the phenomenological. Cassirer writes:

This mystic relationship which obtains between a whole and its parts holds also between genus and species, and between each species and its several instances . . . If under the totemistic conception of the world, a group or clan is organized by totems . . . this is never a mere arbitrary division by means of conventional verbal or mythical "insignia", but a matter of genuine community of essence (p. 93).

The issue of the nature of totemic consciousness, and its role in organizing not only a conception of self, but of creating and maintaining cultural relationships as well will be further investigated when we discuss the work of Levi-Strauss. The notion of "shared consciousness" is here invoked as a means of explaining how

the mythopoetic conception of meaning is imbricated in the construction of both the self and society as one entity.

It is important to consider the nature of metaphor here. If we consider words to be somehow category names not just of individual types of a general class, but as somehow embracing the characteristics of the object as well, then metaphoric transformation is interesting as a means of linguistic reformation. In simile I may transpose one characteristic from a class and move it to another, as in "This ice is as smooth as glass." Here the two distinct categories of "ice" and "glass" are momentarily fused through one shared attribute, "smoothness". This kind of associative thought may very well provide a necessary but perhaps not sufficient condition for the mythic mind set. Here we see the kind of associative thought that underpins horoscopes, tea-leaf and palm reading, voodoo and sympathetic magic. Both astrology and alchemy are formed on the notion of associative thought, a form fundamentally based on simile and analogy.

In metaphor, however, an even more profound kind of transformation occurs. In metaphor all of the characteristics of both categories become fused, such that the categories themselves dissolve and become, for a second, one thing, a thing that can only exist within language itself, not in the external world. Consider the lines:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate  
(Shakespeare, Sonnet xviii)

Here Shakespeare sets up an implicit comparison between his love and a mild summer's day. He rejects two of the shared attributes -- loveliness and temperance -- but leaves the others active but unexamined. How else might a love be like a summer's day? Our imaginations are engaged here in a different degree

than through simile, because the potential of language is opened before us without being exhausted. Is the lover more gentle than the breezes of a summer's day? Is she more fruitful, more full of promise? Although Shakespeare continues throughout the sonnet to develop the comparison, rejecting various readings, and finally settling on the notion of eternal life through the replication of art, the tension created between the figurative potential and the expressed meaning is not emptied of possibilities. Metaphor is a means by which the categories of language, the conceptual frames which it builds, can be shattered, and like some linguistic cyclotron, new meanings are shaped from the shards of the old. Metaphor making provides the basis for a mystic ontology by allowing for the fusion of the Many with the One. "Here again a part usurps the place of a whole -- indeed it becomes and is the whole" (Cassirer, 1946, p. 95). By this method meaning is created through a certain kind of use of language, an associative and metaphoric-transformative usage which embeds meaningfulness through relationship, and relationship in the multifaceted potentialities of language. The self is born through the language act of metaphor-making itself, in creating a space in which categories can interact in the mind through simile and metaphoric connection. Our perceptual, somatic self is fused with the abstracting capacity of category-making and image-making, for image is the very essence of metaphor, in which one thing is figuratively seen as another: "...the same mythic animation and hypostatization which is bestowed upon the words of human speech is originally accorded to images, to every kind of artistic representation. Especially in the magic realm, word magic is everywhere accompanied by picture magic" (Cassirer, 1946, p. 98).

At the end of *Language and Myth*, Cassirer makes what I believe to be his main point -- that language breaks free from that "mystical circle" of figurative speech by manifesting itself as art through the process of becoming a formulation, a representation and not the thing-in-itself. When language becomes self-reflexive,

it becomes free at the expense of the wealth provided it by experience: by becoming abstract, it must lose the fullness of the particular. In artistic expression, however, it returns to its roots in the sea of experience, in perception unmediated by categorization, particularly in the lyric mode. As Cassirer points out, the world of poetry is neither the mystic world of gods and daemons, nor the rational world of scientific discourse, but a world which springs from the creative unconsciousness, one which exists in a middle state. Here we see the link that is built by art between the Mythic and Romantic consciousnesses (as Egan will later define them), and ultimately between the Somatic and Philosophic consciousnesses as well. Cassirer has been valuable in developing our understanding of how we might link language and its origins to imagination, and leads to the work of Claude Levi-Strauss, who develops these ideas further by examining how the movement from the pre-modern to the modern mind can be made. But before we come to the role of the imagination in creating modern notions of meaning, we need to discuss the transition between the oral and literate consciousnesses, a transition which entails examining how Levi-Strauss leads to Havelock.

### **3.3: Myth, Ritual, Magic, Totem and Taboo: Mythic and Romantic Understanding**

Claude Levi-Strauss begins *The Savage Mind* (1962) by arguing that previous anthropological studies which claimed to find an abyss between the mind of the illiterate "savage" and that of the literate modern are in fact mistaken: so called primitive people are equally possessed of those attributes of thought that until recently were believed to be the sole domain of the white Western Europeans who did the studies. What Levi-Strauss does demonstrate, however, is that the capacity to abstract, although possessed by all humans, manifests itself differently

in different cultures. As he argues, the mythic consciousness contains all that is necessary for a more "developed," "scientific" view of the world, and as Havelock shows, it is literacy that makes that transition possible. According to this view, it is not that literacy creates the capacity for abstraction, only that it provides the necessary substratum for analytic thought to become organized along the lines with which we are familiar. An analysis of Levi-Strauss's discussion of how the totemic consciousness operates, however, helps provide the framework which leads to our understanding of the evolution of the literate consciousness.

Levi-Strauss begins by showing that the use of totemic classification schemes, which appear to be arbitrary to the Western mind, satisfies the human need for order just as much as modern humans' needs are satisfied by scientific explanations. These forms of thought are not arbitrary simply because we are unable to grasp their innate system of order inherent in their totalizing grasp. Here Levi-Strauss seems to echo ideas from Cassirer, that the modern and pre-modern are not that distinct. However, while Western science utilizes the concept of causality and determinism in a restricted fashion, the more metaphoric consciousness of the "primitive" mind seeks to draw all phenomena under a system of total determination, in which every aspect of existence becomes part of and representative of every other part, all things being in their place. In fact the sacred object is seen as that thing which is sacred because it occupies its proper place in existence, a place determined by its relationships to all other aspects. From that position it acts rather like a magnetic pole, orienting all phenomena towards it in their own proper relationships. One is reminded here of Aristotelian science and the notion that things fall towards the earth because that is their "proper" place.

The categorization which takes place in the totemic universe is one that follows naturally from such precepts, in that it unites on one plane of understanding

aspects of perception that might otherwise seem disparate, and does so by finding correspondences through metaphoric resonance. Thus, using Levi-Strauss' example, a woodpecker's bill might have efficacy in curing a toothache, because it bears a resemblance to the tooth, and is therefore coexisting with it in a system of interconnections which obtain beyond the merely visual, and which somehow participate in a larger cosmic order. Levi-Strauss even argues that in some sense magical rites operate as a form of faith in a science "yet to be born," (p. 11) a form of engagement with reality in which everything is in some way linked to everything else, and in which deep connection through ritual magic can act to allow human beings a form of control in an otherwise inhospitable universe.

One could argue that Levi-Strauss' position here is perhaps overdone, for he claims at one point that man creates order through systematization to satisfy "intellectual requirements," (Levi-Strauss, 1962, p. 9) not for the practical end of satisfying basic needs. He makes this argument as a means of explaining the Neolithic Paradox: how is it that human beings have been on the planet for 60,000 years in their current state of evolutionary development, yet "civilization" as we currently know it has only arisen within the last few thousand years? For Levi-Strauss, the answer resides in a separation between practical and theoretical knowledge. "Primitive" people needed to systematize what was directly presented to their senses, rather than to create a practical science such as that developed by Western Europeans. He makes this argument to support his previous claim that "primitive" people, so called, were actually working with an intellectual capacity equal to that of more "modern" humans, and that their systems of categorization were equally theoretical in their purpose, if not in their practical application.

As Goody (1977) claims, however, even Levi-Strauss seems unable to free himself of a false dichotomy between the "primitive" and the modern. In his effort to justify the practices of the "savage mind," he has gone too far. As Goody and

Havelock will try to demonstrate, it is not that the rituals and myths of the “savage” paradigm create an order altogether alien to modern notions of rationality, but that literacy itself acts as the bridge between the two. Interestingly, Levi-Strauss, echoing Cassirer’s notion of the importance of art in creating a bridge between levels of consciousness, claims “that the aesthetic sense can open the way to taxonomy, and even anticipate some of its results” (Levi-Strauss, 1962, p. 13).

What is important here, however, is his further claim that both magic and science share the same set of mental operations, even if science is more successful theoretically. Here he seems to presage the work of Havelock when he speaks of the power of classification to create a repository of knowledge: “. . . even a heterogeneous and arbitrary classification preserves the richness and diversity of the collection of facts it makes. The decision that everything must be taken account of facilitates the creation of a “memory bank” (Levi-Strauss, 1962, p. 16). This sounds very much like Eric Havelock’s notion of myths as essentially mnemonic devices used for the storage and transmission of culturally important information and attitudes. For Levi-Strauss, the memory bank of materials, however, is something of a problem, for it acts as a limiting factor on the development of the “savage mind.”

This is where Levi-Strauss utilizes the metaphor of the “bricoleur”, one who fashions things from bits and pieces left over from previous projects. This “handyman” must be extremely creative in his use of materials, but he is always limited by the fact that they were originally used for some other purpose. Mythological thought, argues Levi-Strauss, is very much like this, for it must employ the bits and pieces of almost-forgotten previous attempts to make sense of the world, constantly renewing itself in one sense, but always limited by the materials available, not able to fashion new ones for the new purpose. Unlike the modern engineer, the bricoleur is always constrained by the particular history of

the materials he uses, unable to use the purpose itself to devise new methods. Myths, because of their very totalizing power in creating a sense of cosmic unity, become a kind of mental trap, a closed universe or black hole from which there can be no escape, because there are no materials available to use to fashion a different paradigm. This is an important point, for it contains within it the essential distinction which Levi-Strauss must make to maintain his argument separating the Neolithic and modern versions of science.

From this perspective, although the anatomical distinction between “primitive” and modern is rejected, and even though the “savage” is allowed the same powers of abstraction, those powers are always limited by the nature of mythic thinking itself, a form which acts to satisfy the human need for order, but in this sense is too successful, and becomes a dead end, unlike science, which always allows for growth and development through the challenge of its major paradigms. There are those, of course, who would argue that modern science is itself a form of myth, that rationality is really simply a form of Western ritual, and that all forms of knowing, whether “primitive” or “modern” are equally suspect. We do not have to go to this degree of epistemic relativism, however, to argue that Levi-Strauss has been led to his conclusions through the creation of a false dichotomy. His inability to explain the Neolithic Paradox has led him to create a distinction which, although useful in understanding the perspective of oral cultures which use mythic structures in their epistemology, creates a distinction in thought more apparent than real. Even he is forced to qualify his position to some extent, admitting at one point that “. . . the scientist never carries on a dialogue with nature pure and simple . . . He is no more able than the bricoleur to do whatever he wishes . . . He too has to begin by making a catalogue of a previously determined set consisting of theoretical and practical knowledge . . . The difference is therefore less absolute than it might appear” (Levi-Strauss, 1962, p. 19).

In trying to establish the essential distinction that is relevant here, Levi-Strauss hits upon an important point, one that comes very close to presaging the work of Havelock, Ong, and Goody. He points to what he feels may capture the essential distinction between the bricoleur and the scientist: the bricoleur works on the basis of signs, while the scientist works with concepts. Concepts, in Levi-Strauss' understanding, attempt to be "wholly transparent to reality" ( p. 20) while signs reflect the imposition of human culture. The signs are part of the cultural heritage with which the bricoleur is forced to work, the material from which he is able to form his theories. The scientist, on the other hand, is always on the lookout for a message from nature, one which will extend and transform his/her understanding. Images, alone or in combination with signs, can play a role in helping to fix a place within the mental scheme for concepts that may remain nascent, imbricated within the nature of the conceptual frame in which they belong. They do not necessarily form concepts, but act as operators within a larger scheme in which meaning itself resides as the interrelationship of all factors, such that the potential of signs and images is always limited by the way in which they resonate within the totality of understanding. As Levi-Strauss says, responding to a point made by Boas regarding the way in which mythological worlds are shattered and reconstituted from the pieces, "it is always earlier ends which are called upon to play the part of means: the signified changes into the signifying and vice versa" (p. 21). Mythical thought can therefore create generalizations, and operate on a very theoretical and abstract plane through the use of images and signs which are not yet fully realized as conceptual entities with unlimited relational potential. Had Levi-Strauss made the connection through language from signs to written language, he may have hit upon the element to which Havelock, Ong, and Goody will attribute the movement from the preliterate to the literate mind.

Having made the nature of scientific thought somewhat distinct in its effects from the bricolage of the mythic, Levi-Strauss returns to the role of art in “floating midway on the waves” between the worlds of the scientist and bricoleur. Representationalism in art presents a number of problems as well as possibilities here, for it constitutes a world which is neither scientific nor wholly mythic, as Cassirer has demonstrated. Levi-Strauss is interested in the manner in which art acts to synthesize elements drawn from both the cultural and natural worlds. According to Levi-Strauss’ notion of art (which itself may be problematic), art acts through a metaphoric mode to produce an ordering of experience midway between that of bricolage and science:

the painter is always midway between design and anecdote, and his genius consists in uniting internal and external knowledge, a ‘being’ and ‘becoming’. . . this is surely a nicely balanced synthesis of one or more artificial and natural structures and one or more natural and social events (p. 25).

The distinction between art and bricolage is important here, for whereas myth begins with a structure which it then employs in the creation of the object of contemplation, art begins with objects or events in which it finds a structure, one which acts metaphorically to unite levels of meaning, both external and internal. What is important about this notion of art as a site of both being and becoming will be important when we examine how Havelock conceives of the role of poetry in the construction of a certain kind of self, and may in part explain Plato’s concern over the role of the poet in education.

Levi-Strauss then turns to an examination of the nature of classification among so-called “primitive” people to show that there is in fact a very clear logical basis for their systems, although these systems do not always correspond to Western notions of logic. Sometimes the classificatory system depends not upon one characteristic which acts as an essential component of a category, but on a

grouping of characteristics related by experience and practicality. He offers many examples, such as the ones drawn from the Luapula, who link clans according to certain kinds of relationship which would otherwise seem inexplicable. "The anthill clan is linked with the Snake clan and also with the grass clan because grass grows tall on anthills and snakes hide there" (p. 62). These examples demonstrate the power of the so-called "savage" mind to form categories by association, associations that serve, for these people, a practical purpose in their ecological relationship to a cosmic order in which all things participate.

One of the more interesting points to emerge from his analysis is the notion of abstract binary opposites, which seem to reflect a deep structure within the "primitive" mindset. Oppositional categories are created based on elements of observation, and these categories are fixed along axes which constitute an entire system of classification. Thus night and day, living and dead, male and female, black and white, animate and inanimate, simple and multiple, can take on mythic significance as symbolizing paired elements which form an entire plane of meaning. Series of paired dichotomies can act to categorize in an exhaustive fashion the phenomena under scrutiny, and offer a mnemonic by which elements can be stored in the mind. This signification, or marking, can be transposed from the visual realm to the aural, as when silence is contrasted with speech. In other words, it can undergo a metaphoric transformation to widen its applicability, and thus draw more phenomena under its aegis. What is of the essence here, of course, is not the content of the oppositional members, but the fact of the tension created by the opposition itself as a classificatory schema.

These schemas may represent more, however, than just the functioning of a "primitive" mindset, but reveal something of the deep structure of language itself, in which the existence of something is defined in terms of what it is not, as much as by what it is. In speaking of the use of animal species in totemic thought: "The

notion of species thus possesses an internal dynamic: being a collection poised between two systems, the species is the operator which allows (and even makes obligatory) the passage from the unity of a multiplicity to the diversity of a unity" (Levi-Strauss, 1962, p. 136). In this sense, the existence of the species itself represents a mediating element in the overall relationship between culture and nature, and ultimately acts to reconcile the apparent discontinuity in nature through the uniting of the abstract category names for species to the particular element of the set, a process in which the distinction between abstract and concrete is potentially eliminated through the application of successive dichotomies.

Just as Cassirer demonstrated that metaphor is essential to uniting precept and concept, Levi-Strauss' highly structuralist account has shown the importance of the totemic consciousness in organizing experience through a system which contains in some form the basis of abstract thought, generalization, association, and causal relationship. His work also demonstrates a deep paradox which attends this analysis: the totemic consciousness attains its systems of classification, systems which offer intellectual security, at the expense of an implicit contradiction: the cosmic whole is divided into categories of balanced contrasts which act primarily as complementary, but which also create a tension within the system. Particulars are extracted from the whole and become things-in-themselves in distinction from their embeddedness within the unity of all things. The diachronic and the synchronic (terms used by Saussure) are continually at odds as the knowledge passed down from generation to generation is recast, bricoleur-like, by the needs of the next group. As such it is reshaped, and becomes part of what might be called a "collective unconscious," although not in a way of which Jung might approve. While the overall method of dealing with the split between culture and nature is employed as an overarching paradigm, the knowledge contained in the system itself continues to change, bricoleur-like, as

new elements are added, and others abandoned. The system allows for change (within a scope limited by the materials used), for remembering, as well as for forgetting. What the mythic form of oral language cannot do, however, according to this view, is to fully employ the skills necessary to the advancement of literacy. How the oral evolves into the literate is the subject of Havelock's examination of the nature of oral poetry and Plato's objection to it, and Ong, and Goody's discussions of the technology of literacy.

### **3.4: From oral to literate consciousness**

In *Preface to Plato* (1963), Eric Havelock attempts to analyze the movement from a preliterate to a literate consciousness by discussing the oral nature of society as it existed in ancient Greece, contrasted to the literate society which existed during and after the time of Plato. In fact one of the main tenants of his argument is that Plato was responsible, through *The Republic*, of accelerating that shift from the oral to the literate mode. Havelock's argument raises a number of important issues regarding the nature of the cognitive skills involved in literacy versus those demanded by oral culture, issues which remain relevant for our study of how children attain literacy in school. We need to see how the seeds of literacy are inherent in oral consciousness, and how those seeds can grow under the right conditions into the literate mind, particularly as we deal with issues concerning the development of literacy through the employment of imaginative education, and its use of the cognitive tools of orality.

One of Havelock's main points has to do with how information is stored in preliterate societies, and the resultant modes of thinking that that kind of memory storage entails. As Havelock points out, without the capacity to store information in an easily retrievable form, some method of storing and transmitting the social and

historical "content" of a culture would have to be devised, or the culture would disappear within a few generations. Because the only form of storage would be the memories of the members of the culture, some means would have to be found of making the storage efficient. An obvious method would be the utilization of certain aspects of human psychology, such as our ability to remember rhymes, our interest in patterns and repetition, our capacity to make narrative, our ability to make images and metaphors and so on. These might properly be called oral tools. The question is how these tools can be used as a bridge across the gap between a non-literate and a literate society. Of course the use of these tools also has epistemological and ontological implications, for we are discussing not only how knowledge is stored, and in fact, what is to count as knowledge, but also what impact certain forms of knowledge have on the development of the self. Havelock is interested in the question of how these differing epistemologies have implications for the sense of self attained by different societies.

He begins by discussing Plato's analysis of the nature of poetry in *The Republic*. One of the curious things about *The Republic* is Plato's vehement denunciation of poetry and poets. Why should Plato be so adamant that poetry is a dangerous undertaking? The answer, according to Havelock, is that the mode used by the poet, according to Plato, is alluring but dangerous, that it in fact leads us away from reality, and into a dreamlike state more akin to hypnotism or sleepwalking than fully-realized consciousness. In fact, Havelock will later claim that true consciousness itself was born from the change in syntax that occurred when humans abandoned the poetic mode as it was employed by the Greeks. Plato's ontic logos opens the way both to the scientific paradigm, as well as to the possibility of true individuality, particularly as symbolized by the Philosopher-King who is elevated to a status above and outside of the affairs of normal men through the operation of his intellect alone. But for Plato, in order for this condition of

epistemic transcendence to occur, it is first necessary to take arms against the sea of metaphors that the oral-mythic consciousness creates.

Plato's main concern with the poetic mode seems to revolve around the meaning of "mimesis". The term is usually translated as meaning "copying," but Plato takes it further to mean something more like "identification". And identification is simply a semblance of the thing, at third-remove from reality:

Then it is now time to consider the tragic poets and their master, Homer, because we are sometimes told that they understand not only all technical matters but also about human conduct, good or bad, and about religion; for to write well a good poet, so they say, must know his subject; otherwise, he could not write about it. We must ask if these people have not been deluded by meeting with artists who can represent appearances, and in contemplating the poet's work have failed to see that it is at the third remove from reality... (*The Republic*, p. 329).

But the Greek oral mode, claims Havelock, does more than create poetry. The point of the poetry is to act as a repository of knowledge -- but more than that, a repository of cultural beliefs, norms, attitudes -- what he describes as *nomoi* and *ethea*: custom-laws and folkways. When as Greeks the people hear the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, they hear more than just the record of deeds done: they hear as well the inscribed wisdom of the culture to which they belong. In resolving disputes, Greeks may invoke the behaviour of the heroes, as their deeds are immortalized in the epics, behaviour which reflects what it is to be a Greek, to act like a Greek, to follow Greek customs.

But as Plato points out, "knowing" here does not involve a full consciousness, but a state of reverie induced by the patterns, rhythms, rhymes, images and flow of the epic poetic mode. The poet is one who is able to lose himself in the retelling of the tale, so that he is able to act as the encyclopedia for the race. His listeners may not have his prodigious memory, but they do not need

to. As the tale is told, they lapse into a state of semiconsciousness, and so simply absorb the ideas contained implicitly in the tale. Mimesis here means becoming the tale itself, or at least, identifying so strongly with the heroes that one loses one's "self" in the process. Now this mode was, for the preliterate Greeks, the main method of education, and it is this against which Plato reacts, for it is the opposite of what he considers education to be. Here the group consciousness predominates, subsuming the individual within itself, through the ritualized performance which takes place not in isolation, but en masse. As Havelock puts it "The community has to enter into an unconscious conspiracy with itself to keep the tradition alive, to reinforce it in the collective memory of society . . ." (Havelock, 1963, p. 44). In such a form of memory storage, imagery plays a dominant role, because the poet experiences the formula of the poem in a certain fixed order, in which the images must follow each other in a particular pattern. This is because the poem is not only a repository of deeds and customs, but of technology as well. In other words, the poem incorporates the knowledge of how things are to be done -- here meaning and action are tied together in an inseparable manner, so that it becomes impossible to conceptualize doing something without at once accepting as given the attendant meaning of the action. Here the poetic mode acts to create a synthesis of experience, not an analysis. The listener of the epic is brought into the culture through the retelling of the tale itself, which acts as an oral thread from generation to generation, a thread which must remain unexamined by the analytic, skeptical mind if it is to retrain its power to capture the imagination and form the Self.

Psychologically, the *Iliad*, for example, utilizes certain techniques in its structure that help the act of memory. Repetition is used throughout, so that information is not just in one particular line or verse, but repeated continually in different contexts. In fact, the poem demonstrates a flexibility that allows for

interchangeable verbal semantic units, while adhering to fairly strict metrical rules. Havelock says that "the possibilities of variation in meaning, of alteration of statement, are also in the long run finite. That finitude corresponds to the finitude of that pattern of nomos and ethos which the poet continually recalls" (Havelock, 1963, p. 93). Thus the poet is allowed to vary parts of the pattern within the overall metrical scheme, but the meaning itself remains the same. Improvisation existed not for aesthetic purposes only, but also for the utilitarian one of inculcating the general norms by which society operated. In this case, argumentation, rather than relying upon abstract principles and definitions, depends upon the form itself, which must be metrical and formulaic if it is to be considered part of the voice of the Muse, that spirit which ultimately informs the meaning of the culture, and makes the listeners believe with their entire being what is being said. Further, this repetition and metrical control induces in the hearers a sensual pleasure as they once again rehearse, with the assistance of the bard, their participation in the life of the culture. Given Plato's concerns about democracy and its potential to create a "drunken pleasure cruise," we can only imagine how he felt about the use of pleasure here in the heart of the intellect as a method of inducing agreement.

Havelock makes the argument that this form of oral memory has political implications as well as psychological ones, that those members of the community particularly gifted in the ability to frame their arguments in poetic form would have had an advantage over other "men of action," and as the repositories of culture, and gifted with poetic ability, they would have been able to form the Hellenic intelligence to an unusual degree. The struggle for power would have given the preeminent authority to the more intelligent, and the "Greek genius," as Havelock styles it, would have had fertile ground in which to be nurtured. He makes the argument that the poetic form would have become the dominant form of

communication and of mind, that more prosaic forms of thinking would have had to wait for literacy to become widespread.

He then discusses at some length the mechanisms of memorization that constitute the oral technique of learning versus those of the literate, modern mind. He points to the manner in which several different somatic cues are incorporated in the act of memory, verbal, visual, and physical. The acting out of the epic story takes place in the context not only of the rhythms of the story as retold in metrical verse accompanied by instruments, but with the accompaniment of the listeners as well, who often participate in the ritual, both through chanting as well as dancing. When one considers the way in which music and dance almost always accompany the rituals of so-called "primitive" people, it becomes clear how widespread and how effective these devices are. The participant's entire body is brought to bear on the main job of memorizing the elements of the "text" to be learned. As Havelock puts it, "the entire nervous system, in short, is geared to the task of memorization" (Havelock, 1963, p. 151). Furthermore, this type of somatic recitation tied into the unconscious mind, and drew its aid in supporting the consciousness in the act of recall. There would have been a certain amount of pleasure derived from the ritualistic repetition, much as there is in modern times when one sings along with a well-known song. Havelock calls this type of performance a form of hypnosis, and thus it acted as a cathartic release from the usual problems of everyday living. One is reminded here of Aristotle's notions of the cathartic effect of tragedy, which acts on a personal and social level to release anxieties and cleanse the mind and spirit.

After this discussion of the psychology of the oral performance, and its impact upon the consciousness of the Greek audience, Havelock turns to the question of the epistemology which implicitly informs the poem, guiding its content as well as its form. One of Plato's points in this regard is that although the form and content can be separated through abstract analysis, in fact the form of the poem

and its content remain inextricably linked through the performance, which chimes both at once, a perfect melding of the dancer and the dance. The action of the poem is most alive if it not only embodies action through performance, but through the description of action as well; thus narrative becomes a dominant mode over, say, exposition, as it serves to join the sympathetic nervous system of the listener to that of the poet through both concept and form, rather than engage primarily the critical intellect.

Further, narrative involves the actions of people -- characters -- not disembodied concepts, as we might find in exposition or argument. The oral form by its nature, and particularly as it was made manifest in the Greek context, favors an epistemology based on states of being which involve human actors rather than abstract concepts. What is morally right is what a Greek should do in a particular situation, and for this he looks not to the essences of philosophy, Plato's Forms, but to the action of other Greeks as group memory stored in narrative. Moreover, cause itself is given the attribution of agency: although the poet may acknowledge the physical causes of phenomena, he must also accept that the ultimate cause is the will of the Gods, and thus agentic in nature. When cause is narrativized historically, it becomes personified as powerful forces beyond Man, but still with a "human" face, the Greek Gods being hyperbolic projections of human beings. Historical causality becomes connected to ethical meaning, because the gods often inflict severe consequences in response to human impiety. Thus the cause of the plague that struck the Greek army in the siege of Troy was both a consequence of Agamemnon's sacrilege against Apollo through his appropriation of Chryseis, as well as a result of unsanitary conditions. Both natural and supernatural causes are wedded into a seamless sense of reality, each complementing and supporting the other.

Often these narrative elements are conveyed through the use of metaphor. For example, the notion of historical cause is connected to the idea of birth, so that events are not caused but "born". Because the idea of death threatened the traditions which were being preserved through the oral memory, it was represented in the poems as being associated with an endless succession of births and deaths, part of an unbroken cycle in which the characters are a part. Metaphorically, these notions of being born or of dying are transferred to natural causes and events themselves, which take on an element of the personified being of human action. Thus, says Havelock, "A feud, a battle, a plague or a storm, can do things to other people. They can also themselves 'be born,' 'arise' and 'wither'" (p. 173). Only the gods cannot die, thus standing in contrast to the finite world of man, and creating the infinite context against which our finite lives are measured. Thus Greek poetic discourse melds in one form epistemic, moral, and metaphysical modes, creating a united ontology through the process of narrativized poetics, resulting in a mythopoetic consciousness. The transformation from an oral to a literate consciousness may be characterized as the transformation of information from an anthropomorphic, mythologized form of doings to analytic form of Being.

This kind of epistemological-metaphysical world view is also best developed through the use of imagery tied to its metaphoric associations. Havelock discusses the notion of Achilles' authority as it is represented metaphorically by his staff, which he dashes to the ground in an image which captures the meaning of the act not in a syntactical relationship involving subject, predicate, and past, present, and future tenses, but in an action which itself represents the essence of the event:

Verily by this staff -- it never will leaves and shoots

Put forth again when once it has left its stump in the mountains  
Nor will it ever bloom again. Round about it the bronze has peeled off  
The leaves and bark (p. 174).

The image creates a “timeless present” in which the staff’s entire existence, from its birth to its death, is conceived of as a whole, formed as all its states of being are combined into one image, one gesture as it is cast to the ground. Narrative is built from the clay of metaphor and the sensory impact of imagery into a series of events in which cause is personified, and tied to a moral context which involves the very Being of the poet and his audience. The structure of myth itself seems the most appropriate vehicle for such narrative form, as it allows for the scope in time, space and characterization to unite into one frame the series of events which taken together form the basis of the Greek ethos. Furthermore, this kind of image, existing as it does in a kind of “timeless present,” also acts to unite the synchronic with the diachronic, bringing the most meaningful elements into an immediately lived present moment, uniting the listener with the action across time.

Here we see the nature of the preliterate mind brought into the service of group consciousness and memory. At the same time, however, there exist the precursors of the tools of literacy in the oral consciousness through the melding of two types of structures: the narrative form of action and the literate form of the list. A list implies the notion of essence, of categorization and of linear sequence. But when the list is composed not of things or abstractions but of events, the epistemic gap between the two forms is only potentially bridged. The form is present, but the content makes analytic consciousness impossible. This list in itself must be contextualized in order for it to achieve the necessary relevance, for episodes in the narrative structure derive meaning not from an abstract connection to an idea or Platonic essence, but by their association through the narrative frame, which is itself made relevant by its association to the lived experience of the poet and his listeners. Goody (1977) develops this idea of the importance of the list as a kind of

mediating tool between oral and written language, a means of bridging the gap between the “alphabetic consciousness” of the fully literate Greeks with earlier civilizations who employed signs as part of a memory aid, often for bureaucratic and economic purposes.

This notion of the timelessness of the mythic image leads to Havelock’s main points with regard to the epistemology of the content of mythic and epic poetry. He claims that it must first of all be “time-conditioned”, that is, it exists not as a static entity, but as specific events linked together in a narrative, not necessarily logical, ordering. These events must in themselves be complete, meaningful not only within the larger chain, but within themselves as realized moments; and finally, they must be apprehensible as images, vivid to the mind and memory, but not necessarily suitable for the perception of the analytic mind. In short, Havelock maintains, this kind of epistemology is equivalent to “doxa” or opinion, as opposed to the nature of the truth as Plato envisions it: timeless, not linked by cause and effect, and abstract, not concrete.

From this perspective, it is possible to understand the movement from an oral to a literate consciousness as following Plato’s understanding of the movement from opinion to truth. Havelock invokes the paradoxical notion of the “timeless present” to describe this kind of knowledge -- it exists in an ever present “now” as the poet and listener become immersed in the experience of the poem; thus, it can never lead to Platonic universals or abstract essences. The poetic mind set must be retrained to be able to handle the different demands of literacy, must be able to use the timeless copula of “is” in such constructions as “Human beings are moral agents only insofar as they manifest an interest in the good of the other.” When Socrates, as Plato describes him, asks the youth of Athens to define piety, when he confronts Euthyphro with his inability to explain how his actions in turning in his own father for murder evidence his understanding of pious action, he is

undermining Greek culture not simply by challenging its precepts, but by epistemically deconstructing the basis upon which one comes to “know” right action through one’s participation in Greek culture. It is the process of the *elenchus* (the Socratic method of testing the cogency of the arguments of others) itself which is the danger, not simply the results of its scrutiny. The skeptical, analytic mind is dangerous not merely because of its ironic stance, but because it threatens the very notion of having moral knowledge at all, where moral knowledge is understood as the fusion of the self with the ethos of the culture in which the self is immersed. For Plato, however, real knowledge must involve the separation of the self from the mythic in order that knowledge obtain its objective quality. From this perspective, the mythic creates a world in which subjective and objective are melded into the “timeless present,” and in so doing, the objective frame, that which exists outside of time, but still standing in an unchanging relationship to the temporal flow, was impossible.

The relationship of ideas in this “timeless present” also defies the logical ordering of the philosophic, categorizing temperament in another, more subtle manner, that of the paratactic situation, in which one event is considered to be more important, and the others placed in subordinate relationship rather than in the time-ordered sequence of cause and effect. It is the rhythmic nature of the poem itself that unites these more essential and subordinated moments to form the episodes of the text. The knowledge contained in such poetic renderings remains a series of pluralities, specific instances which are difficult if not impossible to form into an integrated whole with a meaning beyond the particular. Such knowledge remains highly contextualized, as it resists being gathered into one system: the Many refuse to become a One. For this reason, the associative element which appeals most to memory here evoked is that of visualization: one instance of heroism, for example, evokes others, and each is fleshed out by detail which in

itself is inessential to the main purpose of the narrative, but which serves to act mnemonically to preserve the overall effect through imagery. Havelock defines imagery used in this way as “..a piece of language so worded as to encourage the illusion that we are actually looking at an act being performed or the person performing it” (p. 188). But this very power of visual image to be retained by the memory also prevents the creation of the abstract quality which the image many represent from coming into consciousness.

According to Havelock’s understanding, then, some of the devices which give mythic poetry its capacity to remain fresh in the minds of its listeners, also by their nature act to prevent the movement to a fully-realized analytic, rational consciousness, even while they may contain some of the same elements to be found in the literate mind: “As long as its content remained a series of doings or of events none of these could properly be regarded as universals, which emerge only through the effort of rearranging the panorama of events under topics, and of reinterpreting it as a chain of cause and effect” (p. 188). The problem is how we go from an imagistic, mythic consciousness to one that is capable of analytic reasoning, how the transition is made from the oral to the literate, for both societies and individuals as they flourish within the context of culture.

How that transformation is made is the substance of Havelock’s discussion in the last part of the text. His claim is that the invention of the alphabet was the primary cause of the transition from an oral to a literate culture. On the face this would appear to be obvious: people cannot write or read unless there is a symbol system for them to use. But Havelock’s point is much deeper: it is the capacity to process the oral through the visual that makes it possible for the mind to develop the analytic capacities required for a “modern” consciousness. It is not the image which is being utilized here, but the ability to “see” words that allows for analysis and thus skepticism. Previous means of writing, such as the Sumerian script which

was a recording of consonant sounds, were insufficient to create the kind of text required to sustain a philosophic mind. He writes: "The first new phenomena caused by the invention of the alphabet was the preservation of non-didactic poetry composed for private occasions . . . Hence the phenomena in Greece of the so-called "lyric poets" who are simply the first of their company to have enjoyed the possibility of preservation" (p. 292). It would appear that Havelock and Cassirer are in agreement here: oral consciousness seems to manifest itself in the literate mode through lyric poetry before "evolving" into expository forms such as philosophic text. In fact, this lyric, poetic mode may be a necessary transition in the development of a truly literate culture from an oral one. The development of an historical consciousness is part of that same process of change.

This change can occur because the alphabet allows for the images in the mind, created by oral poetry, that refuse to become universals, to be put into a different mode, a timeless mode allowing for a universal essence. The analytic mode of text allows for a different kind of "timeless present", the kind of timelessness that Plato envisioned when talking about the Forms, a time that exists outside of the regular flow of events (which is merely subjective), and from which vantage point the truth can be ascertained. The notion of universals creates a different kind of epistemology, and with it, a different ontology as well. It is now possible to create not only records of events, thus developing a sense of being embedded within historical time, time in which causal forces are held responsible for change rather than the will of supernatural beings; but also to conceive of physical forces as operating outside of Man and constituting a thing called "Nature" which, although not a conscious entity, nevertheless could be known. The pre-Socratics were able to create the concept of unity through the analysis of stories and the formation of patterns out of them, and describing the governing principle not as an event, but as a thing the existence of which requires a timeless

syntax: "The 'one' just 'is.' And so the 'is' comes to occupy pride of place alongside the 'one' "(Havelock, p. 300).

### 3.5: The technology of the literate mind

Some of the first manifestations of the new literate consciousness are discussed by Walter Ong (*Orality and Literacy*, 1982), Jack Goody (*The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, 1977), and David Olson ("*Literate Mentalities: Literacy, Consciousness of Language, and Modes of Thought*," 1996 ). Ong builds upon the work of Havelock, but goes into specifics about the way in which the oral mind developed the tools of literacy through the use of a new kind of epistemological orientation, one which sees reading and writing as a new technology. He examines what he calls the dynamics of textuality, the way in which reader and writer interact through text, as well as the manner in which writing informs the self of the writer as reader. Goody examines the notions of Levi-Strauss, offering a critique of his structuralist position, while accepting much of his overall insight. He further develops the idea of what it means to have a literate consciousness in terms of examining the function of lists and of formulas in generating a different form of consciousness in those that utilize this type of technology. David Olsen examines how writing develops what is called a scientific consciousness, with some discussion of how children might acquire these modes of thought. These conceptions of literacy, however, although valuable in developing our understanding of a certain kind of literate consciousness, may be lacking in an important element, one that Jerome Bruner will discuss when he examines what he calls the two modes of thought.

After discussing the modern discovery of how orality led to literacy, citing Havelock and Milman Parry, who first recognized that the epic poems of the

Greeks were repositories of cultural memory, Ong moves on to examining the manner in which writing restructures consciousness, a kind of "Ongtic " Logos. One point that he makes is that whereas orality helps form group consciousness, reading and writing are more often solitary activities. The writer often composes in his/her study, and although the audience for whom he/she writes may be composed of hundreds (or millions, if you happen to be J.K. Rowling, and your subject is the Mythic/Romantic world of Harry Potter), each reader responds to the writer's work in his or her own way, recreating the world of the writer's imagination in a new form of the individual's own choosing. In a sense, the imagination created from a mythopoetic substructure, a world that shared its group metaphors and images through formulaic poetry and rituals tied to group consciousness, and forming a dominant part of the individual self, now becomes amenable to individual interpretation and reflection. In becoming solitary, language acts open the door to the critical mode of consciousness and ironic self-reflection. As literacy evolves through writing into print with the invention of the printing press, this notion of the creation of individuality takes on deeper meaning, a meaning that comes to full fruition during the 18th century, and in particular, as expressed in the poetic mode during the Romantic era. Commenting in *The Passion of the Western Mind* (1991) on the impact of the printing press on the development of individuality in the West, Richard Tarnas writes:

With parallel effect in the realm of thought, the printing press allowed the rapid dissemination of new and often revolutionary ideas throughout Europe. Without it the reformation would have been limited to a relatively minor theological dispute in a remote German province, and the Scientific Revolution . . . would have been impossible. Moreover the spread of the printed word and growing literacy contributed to a new cultural ethos marked by increasing individual and private, noncommunal forms of communication and experience, thereby encouraging the growth of individualism (p. 226).

This notion of the development of the self is also tied into the somatic dimension, for as Ong points out, sound is a unifying sense: "sight isolates, sound incorporates" (p. 72). Ong argues that whereas sight dissects phenomena into constituent parts, sound acts to incorporate the entire environment into one experience, with the listener in the phenomenological centre. When writing and reading move the centre of the language act from the ear to the eye, they isolate the writer or reader in a way that sound does not. It is no wonder that we say "I see what you mean," not "I hear what you mean," although the latter might actually be more literally true. In other words, reading and writing change our somatic relationship to language itself. We are still immersed in orality, of course, just as we always have been. It is important to remember here the distinction between *langue* (language), *ecrite* (writing), and *parole* (speech), for writing is not simply speech written down, but a new language form based on speech, but with its own technology, a technology which in turn changes the nature of *parole* as experienced. Writing does not simply exist in a domain separate from orality, but in an interactive relationship. The consequence is that if *parole* speaks more deeply to our "self", and is itself influenced by the patterns and meanings of *ecrite*, then the self is influenced on the level of language as a total system, not just in an isolated way through reading and writing. Ong makes the point that:

In a primary oral culture . . . the phenomenology of sound enters deeply into human beings' feel for existence, as processed by the spoken word. . . Only after print and the extensive experience with maps that print implemented would human beings, when they thought about the cosmos or universe or 'world' would they think of something laid out before their eyes (p. 73).

One here thinks of Descartes' reductivist epistemology, in which the dualistic nature of mind and matter emerges as a problem for Western consciousness. Cartesian mapping along coordinate planes offers a perfect metaphor for the

visual mode becoming dominant over the aural, of separation from the cosmos becoming a metaphysical/ epistemological stance with ontological implications.

It is here that we first begin to gain a sense of what we have lost from the development of our primarily literate consciousness, that deep connection to the natural world and to our own culture that a mythic view of the word can potentially create. Here Wordsworth's words from *The World is Too Much with Us* ring true: we have "given our hearts away" in a manner that goes deeper than merely our materialistic obsession with wealth. Perhaps the irony here is that the intellectual is that person who uses the tools of literacy as a means of resolving that split within the self that is caused by the use of those very tools employed in the search for unity. We gain a sense of individuality and freedom, at the loss of our sense of connectedness and wholeness within the cosmos, and spend much of our lives in a futile attempt to reconcile the two modes of our Being. The Platonic Forms, after all, were meant to unite the separate Goods of Truth, Beauty, and Justice on the highest level of abstraction. The hope of Logos over Mythos is that it can combine the unity of self as experienced in Mythos with the rational understanding of Logos to form a complete self, able to operate in both dimensions of Being. For, of course, the mythic consciousness remains as the substructure of the literate, just as the somatic remains as the substructure of the oral. Those moments of transcendence encountered by mystics may reveal the nature of the world that lies within, as much as the cosmos that exists without. Perhaps this sense of loss helps to explain the popularity of movies such as *Star Wars* with its mythic structure and quasi-religious notion of the "Force," *Lord of the Rings*, with its wizards, elves, trolls and hobbits drawn directly from a world of legend and mythology in which there is a pitting of the binary opposites of good and evil against each other, and Harry Potter, the little child in all of us who desperately wishes to discover the magic that resides within the unconsciousness.

Ong spends some time discussing the evolution of writing as technology, from the first pictographic systems to syllabaries through to the development of the alphabet itself, repeating much of what Havelock argued in *Origins of Western Literacy* (1974) and *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (1982). The technology of the alphabet is, on these accounts, what creates the possibility of the literate consciousness by objectifying the phonemes of language in a manner unlike syllabic text, in that it becomes in a sense transparent in the process of reading, unlike syllabaries, which always demand a degree of interpretation. Ong makes the important point that writing gains much of its power through the process of decontextualization: oral language always exists in what Ong refers to as an “existential present,” (p. 101) rather like Havelock’s “timeless present,” except that here it refers to the phenomenological fact that oral speech is always contextualized in the immediacy of lived experience, in the “here and now,” whereas writing is almost always an act that exists across time and space, uniting two minds in a space which is an abstract construction and reconstruction, a world built between the minds of the writer and reader. Here it is as much a question of what is missing as what print or writing can add: tone of voice, facial expression, body language, the possibility of questioning the writer--all are lacking, and as a consequence, written language must create a new set of forms, a new technology, that cannot help but influence the consciousness of the reader, as well as the writer, as he/she composes or recomposes the text in an abstract mental space.

Interestingly, Ong points out that the writer’s audience is always a fiction, and that in fact if one considers the nature of literary “epistemologies,” writers have had to construct their audiences through a slow process of developing psychodynamic spaces in which writer and reader could find a mutual site in which to frame the conversation. We have had to learn how to read writers like Kafka ,

Faulkner, Joyce, Proust, and Borges. Literary studies have become, to some extent, courses in the training of the mind to accommodate itself to the demands made by different authors as they experiment with form and genre in the creation of new hermeneutic mindscapes. The point, of course, is that reading and writing have both become acts of self-creation and not simply acts which are ontologically transparent. Reader response theory, particularly the work of Derrida and Ricoeur, denies the reality of the objective text, and argues that the "meaning" of any text is always in doubt, always subject to revision, uncertainty and reinterpretation. The standard notion of the literary canon itself comes under attack, for from this perspective it is impossible to frame an objective standard by which to choose the "best" of any writing for preservation or study. As Ong points out, there is a deep divide between readers who are still operating from an oral-culture orientation to text and those who have attained a kind of high literacy, whose positioning regarding any text takes on an ironic note of tentative acceptance tinged with potential rejection.

In contrast to these rather heady concerns raised by Ong, Jack Goody's tracing of the impact of the technology of writing on the development of the modern mind seems mundane. Goody is particularly interested in the manner in which the decontextualization of knowledge to which Ong referred has arisen from the mechanics of communicative acts. In particular, Goody wants to focus on the impact of the "material concomitants of the process of mental 'domestication,' for these are not only the manifestations of thought, but also part of its determining features"(p. 9). Goody too discusses the decontextualization of knowledge, pointing to the manner in which classroom education extends the impact of literacy. As Scribner and Cole discovered in their work with the Vai, and as a reinterpretation of Luria's work points out, it is not simply literacy that creates the potential for abstractness, i.e.: for its capacity to mediate in the solutions to logical

problems, but the fact that literacy is often embedded in classroom (as well as cultural) practices that gives it its ultimate power. Whereas Havelock and Ong may have felt that the separation between the mythic and modern consciousness could be explained by the autonomous impact of the alphabet, it now appears that literacy in-and-of-itself is only a necessary, not a sufficient condition for the development of the kind of higher order reasoning skills associated with the literate mind, what Goody terms a "functional cognitive system" (p. 37). One might consider literacy to be a kind of mediator which can be utilized best when combined with a certain kind of training, the kind to be found perhaps in the best kinds of classrooms. The issue here, of course, is what conception of literacy is framing the classroom practices, and what the ontological consequences of those practices are.

Goody also argues against the "great divide" theory, which presupposes that there is some kind of intellectual gap between the work of the scientist on the one hand and the mythic totemism of the mythic mind on the other. As Levi-Strauss has shown, however, both types of reasoning are associated with certain kinds of mental operations which may differ in their content, but not necessarily in their processes. Goody argues against the notion that we can separate the mental operations sometimes associated with "open," modern societies, from "closed," oral ones. As Goody points out, this dichotomization of the modern and "primitive" may be useful for an initial analysis, but once one begins to investigate further, the distinction begins to disappear as similarities begin to emerge. This point is essential for Goody's argument: that the so-called "great-divide" separating literate and oral cultures is explicable not simply in terms of mythic versus scientific consciousness, or metaphoric versus logical processing, but is understandable primarily in terms of the kinds of "language acts" that are possible within each mode. In other words, the technology by which the

thoughts are transmitted and transformed are inextricably linked. It is the form in which conscious thought is presented that makes one aware of the distinctions, rather than some more fundamental distinction in the type of thought itself.

Goody begins this part of the discussion by pointing to the impact of the list on the development of the literate mind. He tells an anecdote about how the use of a list helped point to the differing ways in which Kuhn used the term "paradigm" in his famous *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), in which he argues that science advances in part through profound paradigm shifts that violate the fundamental precepts of earlier scientific communities, a view much contrary to Popper's notion of falsification, which presupposes an objective world to which science is drawing ever nearer through a rational process. Goody points out that Kuhn used the term "paradigm" itself in a multiplicity of ways, without realizing it, and that having to redefine his term has led to a softening of his original position. His point here is that the use of the list allowed an analysis of Kuhn's term "paradigm" in a manner that would not have been possible in an oral culture. The ability of the reader to isolate the use of a term by tracing how it is employed in different contexts through the analysis of discourse by means of a list, is an example of a certain kind of technology available to a literate mind, but not possible for an oral culture. As Goody points out, however, the table, a particular kind of list, also acts to obscure the true nature of oral societies when it is used by a literate mind. As he shows, many anthropologists have used the table as a graphic means of displaying information about oral cultures as a method of examining the mythic structure of such societies. As Goody argues, however; "Both myth and table are deliberate, literary elaborations on the actor's worldview, functions of the ethnographer's *exigence d'ordre*" (p. 58). Tables transform the reality they seek to mirror through the very act of listing attributes and pairing them with other elements in a way that may create an order that was not present in the

mind of the original actor. Chinese horoscopes and Pythagorean obsession with magic numbers and numeric relationships point to a kind of magical thinking created by the pseudo-order produced by lists and tables, a kind of literary artifact rather than a state of real affairs. The word "artifact" is appropriate here, of course, for it is linked to the notion of artificial, a matter of artifice, not of nature. In a sense, this points to a conception of the literate mind as an artificial, unnatural construction, for both good and ill. Art itself, when decontextualized from Levi-Strauss' notion of totemic representationalism, becomes a means both of viewing and of obscuring the real, of both knowing and not knowing the thing-in-itself. Art may have the power to unite the power of the bricoleur with the scientist, but it can also be used as a means of obscuring the real.

Of course this same kind of ordering can reveal deep structures not otherwise obvious. Aristotle's Square of Opposition, for example, is possible only for a literate mind through the analysis of the notions of general classes and their opposites, contradictions as well as contraries, as are the syllogistic forms that flow from the Square itself. From such reasoning come classificatory schemes and charts to reduce thinking itself to a system. And indeed there are some notable successes of such systems. Consider Mendeleev's classification of the elements: the chart he established based on the characteristics of various substances led to his prediction of a number of elements which had not yet been discovered. Mendeleev was able to predict their existence because they fit into a classificatory scheme which demanded their existence in a particular spot. Just as the totemic consciousness believes that things are sacred because they fill their proper place in the cosmos, the scientist takes it as a matter of faith that the universe will ultimately fit into some classificatory schema, when his formulas and charts lead him/her in that direction. Current work on subatomic particles has come down to a theory, electrochromodynamics, which requires the existence of certain types of

quarks to complete tables which demand their reality. But whether the reality of the particles exists apart from the manner in which we choose to measure and classify them is a profound epistemological and ontological problem. What is important, however, is the power of the list to help conceptualize thought in particular ways.

Goody discusses the nature of lists, formulas, recipes and experiments in examining how the technology of the alphabet is developed further into a series of tools that shape literate consciousness. As he points out, the list, or table, relies upon discontinuities, upon a reordering of experience in a form which objectivizes it, while offering new possibilities for its interpretation. The list in a sense turns time into space, for it reorders relationships from temporal flow into the spatial form of place. In doing so it creates boundaries, limits, defining categories and higher-order classification. Lists break the flow of speech into separate elements which can be combined and recombined in different ways, creating relationships that exist only on paper. Lists explode speech into fragments, then freeze them on paper for inspection. As Goody points out, historically lists are among the first products of literacy, used to keep track of items such as animals and foodstuffs. The original use for literacy turns out to be administrative, not literary. It was a long time after the development of writing by the Sumerians (about 3000 B.C.E.) that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were committed to writing. These kinds of lists have immense pragmatic value, being used to reinforce political and economic control. Acting as external repositories for memory, they were a means of relieving the mind of the task of remembering countless details, thus freeing it for more abstract work. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, (although almost certainly as an unintended consequence) they allow for the perusal of ideas in an objective, decontextualized space in which reordering becomes a simple matter of changing categorical descriptors: shall we sort the items by size, by age, by ownership, by weight . . . The possibilities are almost endless.

Of course one of the ways in which information can be ordered is chronologically, and thus the list provides the perfect medium for the creation of history, including not just lists of events in order, but interpretations of the events from a theological perspective. Oral histories such as those discussed by Havelock now take on a new meaning, for they are not frozen in a “timeless present” of discrete events, but can now be view from a new, historicized consciousness. Goody claims that “the piecing together of ‘epic’ material into ‘historical’ form is seen as developing out of the ability to produce lists of this kind” (p. 91). Rather than being a form of oral memory subject to revision as different poets took up the task of passing on the poeticized remembrance of the people, scribes could record with a sense of accuracy the actual record of events in chronological sequence: causality enters the picture, as distinct from the focus only on the will of the Gods. As Goody points out, the transition from the oral to the literate form of history moves through the record of events as they occurred, distinct from a linear sense of time, to an annual recording of events whenever they occurred, annalistic rather than episodic.

From this power of lists to capture what appears to be the essence of experience through abstraction comes a new form of word magic, the notion that the ordering of the world and the ordering of the language must in some sense be linked, that if we find the essence of the relationship between two categories, we have captured the relationship that exists in the outside world as well. Lists based on this notion of lexical and metaphysical connection tend to become exhaustive, seeking to capture in a schema of words all of the possible relationships that can exist in the outside world. This notion of the power of words to capture reality lies behind the kind of thinking evidenced by David Olson’s discussion of literacy and its relationship to scientific thinking.

In his essay "Literate mentalities; Literacy, consciousness of language, and modes of thought," (1996) Olson begins by stating his purpose, which is to examine the part that writing plays in the evolution and development of scientific thought. He also wishes to address the question of how children acquire this mode of thinking. He rejects Goody's claim that logic was the byproduct of the invention of the alphabet, because the evidence seems to indicate that there were modes of logic which existed previous to the discovery of the alphabet. He cites Lloyd's analysis that analytic arguments "evolved in the marketplace, in oral arguments and counter arguments." Secondly, he points to Scribner and Cole's study of the Vai people, who show no particular cognitive skill as a consequence of being literate in Vai, but who do show evidence of enhanced cognitive ability when they have been schooled in English. Third, he argues that there has been no definitive method of distinguishing the oral from the written modes, as the two exist simultaneously in so many cultures, tied together in ways that makes separating their functions difficult.

Instead, Olson makes another distinction which he believes to be more important: the way in which writing makes people aware of a set of concepts about language which have turned out to be extremely important in the evolution of what we think of as scientific thought. In other words, it is not simply that having access to reading and writing makes a person more logical or "scientific" in his/her thought process, but that literacy makes one more aware of the functioning of language itself. He begins this discussion by examining the meaning of the concept of literal meaning: how do we distinguish between the intentions of the speaker (or writer) and the speech act itself? Olson points to the distinction between speaking strictly and speaking "roundly," or metaphorically. He says his hypothesis is simple:

Literacy has a distinctive influence on how language, in particular

meaning, is conceptualized. The meaning tied to the form of expression is the literal meaning; the form of the expression is what is brought into consciousness by writing and literacy. Criticism of an argument in terms of its form is therefore a literate form of thinking (p. 143).

The history of writing, for Olson, is then the story of how speech has been brought into consciousness as we “learn to hear” and think of language in terms of the categories and distinctions provided by the writing system” (p. 144). The Greek contribution of vowels came about as they tried to use Semitic script to write Greek, and had to invent vowels to handle the language.

Olson then points to the fact that children have to construct for themselves many of the same categories and concepts that were constructed historically. He makes the point that children’s spellings of new words are often modeled on their alphabetic knowledge; in other words, their knowledge of the alphabet allows them to represent the sounds of the language using the script provided by the alphabet. But because their knowledge is phonetic and not phonemic, they make many misspellings based on their limited knowledge: “the script provides the model for thinking about the sound structures of speech. The model provides the concepts that make these aspects of speech conscious” (p. 147). Olson goes on to claim that just as knowledge of the alphabet gives children the model by which to represent their spelling, and which makes them conscious of that aspect of language, so for adults writing brings meaning, and “in particular sentence meaning, into consciousness” (p. 147) ; “It is awareness of sentences or linguistic meaning that gives literate meaning its particular properties” (147).

Olson then argues that logical reasoning depends upon just such a form of thinking, that is, that one is able to separate the literal meaning of statements from their implied meaning. Only if one takes a restricted meaning, the one given by the literal meaning, is syllogistic reasoning possible. In order to use syllogisms, Olson

says, it is necessary “to take utterances literally according to the narrow meaning of the words employed” (p. 150). He points to Luria’s investigation of illiterate people of Uzbekistan who were unable to decontextualize their thinking, and as a consequence were unable to reason syllogistically. For Olson, then, literacy is not only fostered by decontextualization, as it is for Goody, but promotes and indeed demands it. Thinking scientifically requires that we are able to extract the “essence” from statements by attending not to their connection to our previous knowledge, but to a set of abstract relationships which may exist only in the context of a particular language act. If I argue that “All A are B, All B are C, therefore all A are C,” I must be able to follow the form of the argument, irrespective of the content implied by A, B or C.

If we take this argument to its extreme, however, meaning has no place in the search for truth. By extracting the content from utterances and focusing only on their form, Olson’s view of the connection between language and consciousness leads to a kind of epistemological dead end. Literacy is narrowly defined as the capacity to think along scientific lines, a reductionist approach that ultimately acts to separate the somatic and experiential from the core of the language act. There is, however, a contrary view, one that examines the notion of meaning from a perspective based on imagination as continuously informing language as it is spoken. This is the view expounded and developed by Mark Johnson, who discusses how our sense of meaning is itself based on preconscious somatic experience.

### **3.6: Meaning and imagination: metaphoric epistemology**

In *The Body in the Mind* (1987), Mark Johnson argues that all reasoning is based on the imagination, which itself is based upon metaphoric association and

imagery. He begins by examining the issue of meaning, and discusses the crisis in the theory of meaning and rationality which he claims exists because of “Objectivist” epistemological assumptions about the connection between language and the world. He lays out what he feels to be the basis for all of our metaphoric connections, our early somatic experiences, which lead to Schematic Structures underlying all thinking. These Structures act to constrain meaning by giving it a context against which it can be framed. Without the imagination, according to Johnson, we could not have a meaningful and comprehensive view of the world.

Johnson begins by discussing the historical basis of Objectivism, which has roots going far back into Western culture. He defines Objectivism as the belief that:

the world consists of objects that have properties and stand in various relationships independent of human understanding. The world is as it is, no matter what any person happens to believe about it, and there is one correct “God’s Eye-View” about what the world really is like. In other words, there is a rational structure of reality, independent of the beliefs of any particular people, and correct reasoning mirrors this rational structure (p. x).

The function of language, in this view, is to act to mirror reality through propositions. Rationality consists in the correct connection between the world and the propositions used to mirror it, to represent certain features of that world. There can be only one correct way of mirroring that connection, although there may be a number of different propositions that express this connection. The meaning of a proposition is what it says about the world. From this Correspondence-theory perspective, the nature of the person who makes the sentences has no bearing on their meaning. Human beings are not part of this equation, and in fact, are detrimental, as they incorporate subjective elements that distort the connection between truth and reality. Johnson links this conception of language and reality to

a number of disciplines that have this paradigm as a basic substructure, such as philosophy, linguistics, psychology, and computer science.

But recently a crisis has arisen within this bedrock belief. Hilary Putnam, in *Reason, Truth and History* (1981), examines Objectivism and points out that “any attempt to provide meaning for abstract symbols via their direct and unmediated correspondence to the world, or to any model of it, must inevitably violate our most basic understanding of what meaning itself is” (p. xi). As Putnam points out, Objectivism depends upon a theory of meaning which cannot meet the definition of truth that Objectivism sets for any proposition. Ayer’s verification principle, for example, which is central to Logical Positivism’s notions of truth and meaning, cannot itself be verified by either empirical or logical means, for it is neither a synthetic nor an analytic proposition. Even worse, were the verification principle somehow to be framed as either a synthetic or an analytic proposition, it would then be a tautology, being used to verify itself. Furthermore, if we examine the notion of categorization, a notion central to any theory of language, we find that the Objectivist definition fails to account for the way in which people do in fact create categories. According to Objectivism, categories are defined by necessary and sufficient conditions which delineate the properties which are shared by all members of a set or category, and only by those members. But Johnson argues that categories are framed on metaphor, schema, and mental imagery, which themselves are based on bodily experience, and not on anything external to human experience. If we examine how concepts are framed, according to the Objectivist definition, they exist in and of themselves, and are thus independent of any human imaginative conception. According to Putnam, however, empirical studies confirm that concepts are grasped through the lens of culture, and the notion that there is a culture-free method of framing concepts is not empirically verifiable.

From the perspective of Johnson's critique of Objectivism, then, metaphor, which has often been conceived of as a kind of deviant linguistic expression in Objectivist terms, turns out to be a fundamental and irreducible imaginative structure of human reasoning. Polysemy, which involves the multiple possible meanings that a word may have which are systematically related (as in Johnson's example: "The ad was in the newspaper," and "He works for the newspaper,") can only be fully accounted for by understanding the way in which metaphor plays a role in shaping understanding. In the first use of the term, the "newspaper" refers to the actual piece of paper that exists in physical reality. In the second use, however, I am not asserting that someone works for a piece of paper, but for the abstract business entity which the piece of paper represents. Historical semantic change can also only be completely accounted for by including metaphoric projections within human conceptual systems motivated by common human experiences. Non-Western conceptual systems also cannot be completely mapped onto Western systems of thought. Some notions of science imply that our understanding is coming closer and closer to the "correct" view, and although we may not attain it, we are drawing nearer to one complete understanding. But recent developments in works such as Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) indicate that what counts as knowledge is context dependent, that there is no one final system of knowledge towards which all others are converging, even if science does seem to be making progress in terms of understanding.

For these reasons Johnson concludes that it is necessary to "open the field of semantics, and to enrich our account of reason, in order to comprehend this new range of phenomena that are now being recognized as central to human understanding" (p. xiii). In order to do this, he suggests that we need to refocus our attention on the human body, which Objectivists have ignored because reason was thought to be transcendent, and the body merely subjective (a notion which

goes back to Plato). Yet new theories of meaning require that the human agent in reasoning be considered in all of his/her fullness of being. Imaginative structuring of experience is deeply tied to the body; understanding is itself embodied in our physicality, not merely in our mental states.

Johnson talks about two types of imaginative structures: image schema and metaphoric projections. He defines image schema as “a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience” (p. xiv). He cites the verticality schema as an example of how we employ an up-down orientation to our understanding in making our experiences meaningful, a schema that arises as a natural consequence of our everyday experiences in climbing stairs, looking up to the sky, seeing the level of water rising as we fill a glass and so on.

These kinds of structures, of which there are dozens, underpin the ways in which we structure other aspects of our experience through the use of metaphoric association, so that metaphor itself depends upon bodily experience. Johnson claims that it is through metaphor, built on our physical connection to the world, that we structure our abstract understandings:

Understanding via metaphoric projection from the concrete to the abstract makes use of physical experience in two ways. First, our bodily movements . . . are structured and that structure can be projected by metaphor on to abstract domains. Second, metaphoric understanding is not merely a matter of arbitrary fanciful projection from anything to anything. . . Concrete bodily experience constrains the input of the metaphoric projections but also the projections themselves, that is, the kinds of mappings that can occur across domains (*Body in the Mind*, p. xv).

Johnson gives as an example the metaphoric structure “more is up”. Here quantity is metaphorically linked to height, so that we have such expressions as “wages are rising,” “costs are spiraling (in which direction?) out of control,” the

population is higher than before". According to Johnson, these metaphoric images connect our experience of height with our understanding of an increase. It is through such metaphoric connections, he argues, that people actually structure their reasoning. Human understanding is central to Johnson's argument. For him, there is no meaning without understanding, and no understanding without the body. These understandings are preconceptual and non-propositional, and form the background against which our conscious, propositional knowledge is foregrounded. Human understanding is predicated upon human experience. Johnson rejects the Empiricists' definition of experience as being merely the sense impressions that register in our conscious minds, and instead defines it as a complex including perceptual, emotional, linguistic, physical, historical, and social aspects.

Johnson extends his argument by pointing to the problem of conceiving of imagination as occupying this central ground between precept and concept, participating in both yet being fully neither. This is reminiscent of Descartes' problem with mind and body, for he was ultimately unable to account for the mediation between these two separate entities. Analogous to this problem of spanning both sides of an ontological divide is the issue of how a mechanism which is meant to be rule-free on the one hand can also be free of restraint on the other. If imagination is free and non-rational, how can it also underlie our notions of rationality? As Johnson points out, both of these divisions exist because of the nature of Kant's analysis, which is built upon a Cartesian split ontologically. If reality is divided between the material on the one hand and the immaterial on the other, there can ultimately be no mediation between them which does not eventuate in logical paradox. This is the epistemological situation that Plato created initially with his separation between the sensible and the rational realms of experience. By casting doubt on the value of the sensible realm, and relegating emotion to a lower level, he set the grounds for the split that has dominated

Western thought for 2 000 years. Kant cannot free himself from this fundamental dichotomy any more than Descartes could; and thus his theory of the imagination, although paying much more respect to the role of the imagination than Plato ever did, ultimately cannot reconcile these disparate views of knowledge, and therefore cannot ultimately provide a coherent theory of the imagination.

Johnson offers, in contrast, an understanding which seeks to heal the rift which Platonic thought has created. He offers a view of human cognition in which the gap between sensation, understanding and imagination is erased. If the split between the analytic and the synthetic is denied, then cognition cannot be a pure category, reason cannot be ultimately separated from precept or emotion, and integration becomes possible. Imagination can range freely along the continuum of being, acting to unite the poles of precept and concept. Frege, who argues in a manner reminiscent of Kant, has attacked the notion of the imagination as offering objective knowledge by arguing that mental images are subjective, and because I cannot share someone else's mental image, I cannot accept that image as grounds for knowledge. But as Johnson points out, even if mental images are private, the image schema underlying them may have a more objective base derived from our shared experience in the world.

This is the point where knowledge becomes a community-based entity, jointly constructed by the sociocultural heritage of a culture once we bring symbolic communication into the picture. Here we see echoes of the work of Vygotsky. Meanings exist in a shared framework which is inculcated in the individual through shared experiences on every level. In some sense, this is what it means to have a culture. For every culture, meaning and creativity will spring from the source of a shared history and way of living in the world. In some ways this answers the postmodernist challenge to a shared basis for ethics, for just as aesthetic taste based on the role of the imagination will fall under the realm of

knowledge, so will ethics. Just as imagination does not depend only upon rules and algorithms, neither does rationality, for in the end, as well as the beginning, we can only reason about structures that form part of human meaning, and these structures ultimately do not exist in some disembodied realm of Forms, but within human experience, physical, emotional, and intellectual.

### **3.7: Rethinking meaning**

The logical extension of this view of knowledge is that forms previously felt to be inferior in their capacity to reflect “reality” can be moved to a more central place in our toolkit of understanding. This kind of rethinking of the nature of understanding is reflected in works such as Edwin Hersh’s discussion, “Imagination and Its Pathologies: Domain of the Unreal or a Fundamental Dimension of Human Reality?” (2003). Working from a perspective in which he hopes to examine the basis of psychological theories, Hersh compares and contrasts two models of the imagination which he claims are derived from two distinct philosophic traditions. The standard model of truth, as it might be called, is the one implicit in most scientific inquiry. It is a model which is based upon the Correspondence theory of truth, in which perceptions, images, and ideas are meant to relate to some external reality independent of subjective understanding. In this view, there is a hierarchy of levels of theoretic inquiry, beginning from an ontological level on which the absolute truth is seen as the ground against which our epistemological models are framed. Criteria for testing truth are based upon this epistemological position, and form the basis for discipline-specific domains of inquiry. At the top of this hierarchy is the psychological realm of human experience in which people think, feel, behave and interact, a realm far removed from the “real” world of objective knowledge. This is the standard reductionist model, in

which the ontological status of an particular phenomena can be reduced to the operations of some lower level of reality, which itself can be reduced until we reach the level of strings, quarks or some more fundamental construct, perhaps pure mathematics itself, rather as the Pythagoreans believed. In critiquing this model, Hersh points to the work of many postmodernists, as well as to the insights of Merleau-Ponty and others, for whom valuing an external object as representing an ultimate truth is of less importance than considering the nature of the experience of the individual perceiver.

In contrast, Hersh offers a model which, beginning with similar ontological assumptions, builds a different type of relatedness between observer and reality. The essential distinction here is that contrary to Descartes' notion of a fundamental division between observer and observed, Hersh argues for an intentionality-based paradigm, one more in keeping with phenomenological conceptions. This paradigm maintains the existence of an external reality, while disagreeing sharply as to the nature of the connection between the observer and that external realm. In this view, the observer is not fundamentally separate from the realm observed, but is seen as connected intimately through the notion of intentionality; we are connected to the world through the nature of our relatedness to it, and that relationship is mediated by our intentions towards it. In other words, the world is a place of meaning-making, not of disconnectedness.

Rather than a Correspondence theory as a fundamental model of truth, this kind of epistemological stance depends more upon a Coherence view, in which things are made true through their connection to other elements of the model, and to the observer, rather than to their capacity to represent aspects of the exterior "real" world. Consciousness is an essential attribute in this framework, in that it allows the individual to project himself/herself into a possible future state of being, towards what Hersh terms "anticipated future possibilities" (p. 43). Our relationship

towards the elements of external reality is always to see them as satisfying some possible future need. Our “way of being, including our very perception . . . is always ‘caring’ or ‘motivated’ ” (p. 43). This notion of future possibilities drawing us towards their manifestation through the operation of the imagination has obvious resonances with the work of Sartre in his discussion of the role of the imagination in creating the possibility of human freedom, as well as with Aristotle's teleological notions of the human psyche.

One is reminded here too of Hilary Putnam's critique of Objectivist models of scientific inquiry, in which he demonstrates how these concepts have failed to legitimate the Positivist approach to reality. In discussing the problems inherent in a Benthamite approach to morality, for example, he points to the psychological simplicity of Bentham's Utilitarian notions, themselves founded upon an instrumental view of ethical behaviour. In Bentham's notion (which drew heavily on Mill's dictum that reason ought to be a slave to the passions), what was important was the use of reason for choosing the means to an end; the end itself was felt to be beyond reason, and merely reflected the individual's preferences. The ends one chooses are beyond criticism; only the means can be questioned, and those only on the grounds of efficiency. From this perspective, there is nothing to say about the Holocaust except that Hitler was perhaps inefficient in his pursuit of his final end for the Jewish people. As Putnam (1981) points out, however, this kind of means-end reasoning has at least one flaw: the question of whether one is able to choose a different end given that the cost of pursuing a goal is exorbitant. As Putnam then says:

This opens the door to a question which has as much to do with imagination as with propositional intelligence: the question of what it would *actually be like* , experientially, to attain a goal . . . The man who prefers pushpin to poetry may not actually be able to imagine what it would be like to have developed a

sensitivity to the nuances of real poetry, and if his intelligence could be raised or his imagination improved he might be brought to see that he is making a *mistake* (his emphasis, p. 169-170).

If Putnam's critique is correct, then it is possible to see that the imagination has a role to play that connects our epistemological notions to our ethical and perhaps aesthetic ones as well, that it is a mistake to imagine that the Good in human affairs can be conceived of coherently as fragmented into separate pieces which remain disconnected. In fact, these sentiments have echoes that could pertain to our notions of what constitutes good educational practice. The role of imagination in education, from this view, might be conceived of as helping our students understand why poetry is preferable to pushpin, and what role the imagination can play in that understanding. The question, of course, is how these pieces can be reintegrated. I shall return to these issues when I discuss my personal view of the imagination and its use in education, after I examine Egan's notions.

### **3.8: Narrativizing understanding**

This reintegration of meaning might best be thought of as potentially occurring in the space of what Trotman (2005) has called the "imaginative lifeworld", a world of possibilities which draw upon not only the conceptual understanding, but upon "the active engagement of the emotions, feelings, and forms of empathy" (p. 63). In speaking (or writing) of the importance of narrative, Mark Turner (1996) says that "Narrative imagining-- story-- is the fundamental instrument of thought. Rational capacities depend on it. It is our chief means of looking into the future, of predicting, of planning, and of explaining. It is a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition generally" (p. 5). Monica Hilder (2005) calls upon teachers to actively utilize literature to develop an ethic of care in their

students, a process which demands that the imagination be drawn into the struggle to produce students who are, in Nel Noddings words, “competent, caring, loving, and lovable people” (quoted by Hilder, p. 43). Hilder claims that teachers ought to choose works of literature that are particularly suited for meeting this mandate. But why should works of literature have the power to invoke the imagination in a manner that can lead to this kind of deeper development? What is it about narrative that makes it such a powerful tool for imaginative understanding and potential integration?

In “Narration, Knowledge, and the Possibility of Wisdom”, Walter Fisher discusses the essential role of narrative in constructing understanding. Fisher begins by arguing that he does not intend his definition of “narrative” to be bound by a typical genre classification such as saga, novel, myth, or fairy tale. Instead, he wishes to cast his net more widely to include other forms of meaning making:

Narration, as it is used here, designates a conceptual frame, one that I think is intrinsic to the nature of human beings. Narration, then, would account not only for the kinds of discourse just mentioned but also all other discourse forms, including scientific, historical, philosophical, political, religious and so on -- *insofar as they lay claim to our reason*. (his emphasis, p. 170).

For Fisher, narration is a “master metaphor”, a way in which human beings naturally make sense of experience itself, rather than simply being a mode of expression which can take its place as a form merely of entertainment beside such more exalted forms such as philosophic reasoning or scientific inquiry. Fisher takes issue with Jerome Bruner’s claim that “there are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing a distinctive way of ordering experience, or constructing reality” (Bruner, P. 11, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*). Put simply, Bruner’s argument is that these two modes are the logical-scientific versus the narrative, and although imagination is necessary for both modes of

thought, the two are ultimately irreconcilable, that the narrative mode gives us the worlds of possibility, but not the worlds of actuality.

Now if Bruner is correct, then it is clear that the imagination must at least be given a central role in all of our thinking about the world, no matter how we conceive of that world. According to this conception, however, the narrative mode is something to be outgrown as we advance to the logical, scientific, "mature" understanding of reality. Fisher acknowledges Bruner's contribution to our understanding of the value of narration by pointing to Bruner's claim that narration is central to our understanding of the world through both "deeply internalized" folk psychology and "historically rooted institutions" that support our cultural mores. But Fisher wishes to make the stronger claim that the narrative mode of thought is intrinsic to the "logical-scientific" mode as much as any other form, and that we cannot have any form of understanding without it. For Fisher, all forms of persuasion ultimately involve a story, a way of appealing to certain frames of understanding that are part of our consciousness, whether those forms are framed as a story or as a legal or scientific argument. He makes this claim based on the notion that all forms of argument ultimately depend upon some reference to something that we hold as a value, some conception of the "Good" to which the argument adheres. Good reasons are only "good" because we find their appeal to be linked to some deeper notion of meaning, and that notion itself is of a narrative nature.

Fisher's central point here is not just that the distinction between the narrative and the logical modes is largely illusory, but that in separating the two, we have lost the possibility of wisdom. For Fisher, real wisdom consists in maintaining the link between how we do something and whether we ought to do it, a distinction which he claims has been lost because of a false dichotomy between the logical and narrative modes. We need to be able to operate in an imaginative, not just a

logical space, in which all of the potential implications and consequences of our behaviour can be “rehearsed” in a sense, and measured against some deeply held framework of meaning. But at this point we need to ask a very simple question: If we accept that narrative as a form is central to our ability to make meaning, why should this be the case? The answer to that question involves a consideration of the evolution of human consciousness, beginning with our most early ancestors.

### 3.9: Homo fabula

Merlin Donald (1991) makes the claim that the human mind has developed in an evolutionary manner that fundamentally privileges narrative as a means of knowing about the world, supporting the work of Fisher, Hersh, Bruner, Turner, Johnson and others on a very basic level. According to Donald, narrative skill is not simply something for which we use language, but an essential part of the way in which language itself developed. Narrative is the primary method by which early human beings brought coherence to their world, not just one of the byproducts of language use. Donald presents a fairly complex model by which he supports this claim, in which lower-level aspects of language use, such as phonological and morphological elements, are integrated by a higher-level processor called the linguistic controller. This controller in turn has inputs from two high-order assemblies, the episodic memory and the mimetic controller. Donald's evolutionary model explains each of these higher-order assemblers as having been developed from more primitive constructs that helped our development from *homo habilis* to *homo erectus* to the more advanced *homo sapiens* stages. The episodic memory input is what allows us to draw upon our experiences of the world in constructing our understanding. Donald argues that the most primitive level of representation of reality would be that which we share with other animals, the level

on which each event is experienced as a separate thing in consciousness. Responses to the environment are therefore context-bound, short-lived, and relatively unstructured. At this level of cognition, abstraction is not possible, and so language use is severely limited, if not impossible. Learning here is limited to the events that happen within the lifetime of each individual, as knowledge cannot be passed from one member of the species to another.

The mimetic controller, which developed in *homo erectus*, demonstrates a quantum leap in capacity for knowledge dissemination over the episodic stage of *homo habilis*. Mimetic culture depends upon the capacity to produce “conscious, self-initiated representational acts that are intentional but not linguistic” Donald, (p. 168). This kind of act differs from mere mimicry because it has this requirement of intentionality connected to it. Furthermore, it is an essential element in building higher-order forms of social communication. And as Donald points out, these forms of communication still play a role in social events such as games and entertainment, echoing Aristotle’s notions of the importance of mimesis in the deep structure of drama. Our response to art as portrayed on stage must connect to more fundamental levels of meaning in which the nature of representation itself is being utilized in a vehicle for creating meaning below the conscious, logical level of understanding, yet fundamental to it.

These two controllers feed into the higher-order linguistic controller which then produces language which represents a picture of “reality” to both the individual and his/her social group. Donald argues that mythic culture grows from this process of representation, a process which integrates knowledge, and in the process, produces modern consciousness as a necessary byproduct of this integrative function. We are, on the most fundamental level, a kind of story that we tell ourselves about our experiences in the world. The Cartesian ontological duality is thereby erased through the production of a mode of being which not only

self-represents the world in narrative terms, but reintegrates that understanding through story, and in particular, through mythic forms which structure our ethical and cultural understanding in aesthetic modes of representation.

What I find interesting about Donald's argument is not only his discussion of how deeply embedded narrative is as a part of human consciousness, but also how the development of language and narration takes place in the context of culture. Language cannot be thought of as merely a tool of the individual mind, but as a product of cultural evolution in which one of the major drives of evolutionary change is the fact of the individual's connection to culture as a dominant part of the environment. Language exists not just within the individual human mind, but in a sense within the collective mind of the group to which the individual belongs. As Donald puts it:

The social consequences of mythic integration were evident at the cultural level: narratives gave contextual meaning for individuals. In Paleolithic cultures, and in aboriginal cultures in general, the entire scenario of human life gains its perceived importance from myth; decisions are influenced by myth . . . myth governs the collective mind (p. 268).

### **3.10: Summary**

Beginning with Cassirer, and ending with Merlin Donald, I have tried to trace the development of literacy by examining how it arises from a mythopoetic connection to the world, and is given power through the alphabet and the various forms that literate technology allows. Precept becomes concept through categorization, and categorization depends upon finding how the specific instance can be subsumed under a general class. Metaphor and imagery are essential components of language creation here, as is the somatic connection to abstract categorization. Metaphor gives rise to mythic thinking, which utilizes the power of

abstraction to create a unified vision of the Cosmos in which the One and the Many can be fused through a mythopoetic understanding. The self is part of the natural world, and culture and nature are unified. Mythopoetic consciousness manifests itself in the epic form, in which history, ethics, and aesthetics blend to create a totalizing experience in which the self is created and sustained through its connection to cultural mores and beliefs.

But even as the alphabet, and literary forms such as the list and formula, act to transform the basic conditions of consciousness by providing the opportunity for reflection and criticism never before possible, they seem to divide us from ourselves. The technology of literacy creates the potential for individuality, while acting to separate the One from the Many, the person from his or her cultural heritage, and from nature. In his poem "The World is too much with us," Wordsworth poetically argued that we have lost much through our separation from the natural world. As he put it, we have "given our hearts away." He was speaking, of course, of the influence of modern technology and the forces of industrialization, but his sentiments are applicable here too, I think, if we consider the way in which our literacy has provided the basis for our technology itself. Giving our hearts away may have been necessary to become literate beings, but I would argue that it has led to increasing isolation and alienation. Literacy becomes a form of oppression in the exact degree to which it is used to form meanings alien to the lived experience of the individual, through the creation of categories into which experience is structured for other purposes. Here I am echoing Willinsky's notion of how literacy can be used as a means of oppression as well as liberation. Some means must be found for uniting the abstracting power of literacy with the somatic, phenomenological depths which give the language act meaning.

What has been missing so far from these discussions of the power of literacy is the issue of how the original oral tools which form the basis upon which

literacy is built, both historically and ontogenetically, can be utilized in creating a connection between the mythopoetic consciousness and the scientific one. The dominant way of thinking about the development of literacy seems to be that the original tools of orality have been somehow supplanted by later developments, that the tools of oral consciousness need to be surpassed both historically and educationally in order for "real" progress to be made. From this perspective, the movement away from the mythic and somatic towards the abstract and the disembodied would seem to be necessary.

But suppose this perspective has it completely backwards. It may be the case that the tools of orality cannot be abandoned, that they form as much a necessary substratum of consciousness for a more developed form of literacy as the foundations of a building do for its structure. Without the proper foundations, a building can only rise so far. Here I am using a kind of metaphor or analogy to demonstrate the point, and also utilizing imagery to create a picture in the reader's mind. I am, in fact, appealing to the reader's power of imagination, using the basic tools of oral consciousness as allies in the argument. Educational theorists have long avoided the whole question of imagination, perhaps because they distrust its power, or see it as indistinct from fantasy, a childhood state which we must somehow surpass, allowing it some brief existence in works of art perhaps, or as mere entertainment only. But if the tools of orality are necessary as a foundation for a fully-developed literacy, and if orality utilizes the basic powers of the imagination, it would seem to follow logically that developing the imagination is as important -- or perhaps moreso -- than merely developing the logical powers of cognition, that cognition without imagination has nothing to operate *on*. Here I am conceiving of imagination not only as content, but as process as well. Kieran Egan, in *Teaching as Story Telling* quotes the dictionary definition of imagination as "the act or power of creating mental images of what has never been actually

experienced” (p. 7). This is not a bad place to begin, but I would add that it can also include the power of transformation, so that one thing can become another; of using metaphor to create comparisons that were not previously noticed; and of creating meaning with emotional resonance drawn from a narrative structure. This kind of thinking will employ its own form of logic, a form separate from, but not completely alien to, the kind of thinking employed in science.

Perhaps the problem stems from an over-reliance on the part of the Western mind on the type of positivism fostered by certain elements of the Enlightenment. It may be that our dependence on logic and empiricism has led to a sterile and stultifying world of machines and machinelike people. What has been lost is a sense of connectedness, the kind of connectedness to be found perhaps in more “primitive” cultures and practices. What is needed is an approach to literacy that leads to a deeper connectedness to experience, not an objectification of it. Such a teaching philosophy would have to take as its starting place an understanding of the oral roots of literacy, and how it can lead to both a poetic as well as scientific view of existence as it explores the polysemic possibilities of literacy and language. It would have to utilize these tools in a way that embeds them in the lifeworld of students, not just in a decontextualized analysis. It would have to be developmental, in the sense that it attended to the interests of children as they grew and changed, and as their developing literacies allowed them to grow in new directions. It would have to utilize the powers not only of abstraction and decontextualization, but of mythic resonance and metaphor, imagery and story. It would have to educate the whole self, not just an isolated part of it. It would have to rediscover the power of the imagination as a force not only for a narrowly conceived, scientific literacy, but for the formation of the self. In other words, such a perspective on literacy requires placing at the centre of our concerns the student in his or her private as well as public encounters with the word as well as with the

world. Imagination, from this view, is not a mysterious force incapable of being utilized because it lies outside the domain of theory, but instead becomes a necessary mediating tool, in the Vygotskian sense, for helping the child at once maintain a sense of independence, while helping to form a consciousness allied to both nature and culture. From such a perspective, imagination is that power, shared by all human beings, of using metaphor, imagery, narrative and a host of other natural tools of orality to form meaning. Rather than being a stage that we can or should outgrow, it is a necessary aspect of education. A literacy that based its foundation on orality as a starting point, that sought to heal the divide between the two modes of knowing, would be liberating in the most profound sense. The road to literacy runs not only through the abstract technology of literacy as it is often practiced now, as a type of mental exercise with a utilitarian end, but as a form of self-knowing, as well as world-knowing. These two epistemological ends need not be separate, but can perhaps be conjoined to form a fully meaningful praxis. A first step towards this is to examine the manner in which these cognitive tools of the imagination have been theorized by Kieran Egan in his own notion of imaginative education.

## Chapter Four: Egan's theory of imaginative education

### 4.1: Introduction

In this chapter, I shall be examining some of the main features of Egan's theory of imaginative education, and discussing how that theory might be applied to classroom practices, particularly in the area of literacy. I shall be outlining Egan's concept of childhood development, and contrasting it with earlier notions, particularly those of Spencer, Dewey, and Piaget. I shall be examining as well the characteristics of each of the various stages of development as Egan describes them, and attempting to link them back to the notion of cognitive tools, as well as to our notions of the imagination. I shall also review the discussion of the psychology of the imagination to show how it supports Egan's notions of cognitive tools. I shall end this chapter with some personal reflections on imagination, attempting to show how my own interest in cognitive tools and the development of literacy is based upon Egan's ideas, but attempts to incorporate other notions as well, particularly those based on the philosophic history of the imagination and its connection to epistemology. In order to understand Egan's theory of the imagination and its application to the classroom, however, I first need to draw together some of the ideas that have been presented in the previous three chapters.

In chapter one, I discussed the current situation with respect to literacy research. As I tried to show, an approach based on the sociocultural work of Vygotsky and the notion of the zone of proximal development, seems to be at the forefront of interest for many researchers, who are now aware that literacy practices in classrooms must take into account the diversity of the student population. Literacy is now seen in broader terms, and extends beyond the basics of reading and writing to include speaking, viewing, and representing ideas in a

variety of contexts and mediums. Literacy is also seen to extend across the curriculum, and not to be solely the province of language arts teachers. Classroom discourse has become central to our understanding of how literacy practices operate in a sociocultural and sociocognitive manner to develop literacy. Expressivism and engagement are now seen to be important, for many researchers and teachers, for the full development of students' abilities, and the imagination is becoming recognized by some researchers as valuable for the development of students' capacity to appropriate the voices of adults. Basic to all of these ideas is the notion that cognitive tools, developed by culture over extended periods of time, can be used by teachers to mediate the learning of their students.

In chapter two, I discussed the philosophic roots of the notion of imagination itself, attempting to show why its epistemological status has been so contentious, but also how it now is beginning to become more important to new epistemological conceptions. I discussed how the imagination has been conceptualized historically, beginning with Plato's distrust, to Aristotle's more tentative acceptance, to the return of the imagination during the Medieval period. I examined how Descartes could not dismiss the imagination from his epistemology entirely, even though he attempted to do so explicitly. I showed how the Enlightenment thinkers allowed the imagination a role in their epistemologies, while still elevating reason to the highest level. This historical contextualization of imagination's role in epistemology led to a discussion of more modern notions of meaning, beginning with the work of the Phenomenologists. The imagination had a more problematic connection to knowledge among thinkers such as Sartre and Husserl because of their questioning of the power of the image. More recent epistemological conceptions, however, have made the imagination essential once again as we begin to understand how meaning itself emerges from metaphor and somatic experience,

leading to our most recent notions that narrative is central to our ways of understanding the world, and narrative itself depends upon certain cognitive tools.

In chapter three I reviewed the psychological background to the development of these cognitive tools, attempting to show that the movement from orality to literacy depends historically, at least, on a kind of scaffolding. Cassirer examined the roots of consciousness and its connection to language, and concluded that metaphor is essential for both. He shows how metaphor is an essential component of categorization, a mental capacity central to language making. Claude Levi-Strauss argues that mythic consciousness contains all that is needed for analytic thought, requiring only the tools of literacy to release its potential. He discusses the manner in which abstract binary opposites are utilized by the mythic consciousness as a means of creating order, and demonstrates how much of our capacity for abstract thought, such as generalization, association, and causal relationship, can be seen in mythopoetic thought. As Eric Havelock has shown, oral cultures, such as the ancient Greeks, were able to employ these oral tools for centuries in order to pass down their cultural heritage. Rhyme, rhythm, metaphor, the list, and imagery, for example, were widely employed in epics such as the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* as mnemonic aids. The narrative form itself combines many of these devices in a way that has an emotional as well as an ethical impact on the reader. Walter Ong builds upon the work of Havelock, but goes into specifics about the way in which the oral mind developed the tools of literacy through the use of a new kind of epistemological orientation, one which sees reading and writing as a technology. He also discusses the notion that text affects the self of the reader as well as the writer. Goody examines the idea of the literate consciousness in terms of the function of lists and of formulas in generating a different form of consciousness, while David Olson discusses how writing develops a scientific consciousness. Writers such as Johnson, Fisher, Hersh, and

Bruner have provided a basis for extending many of these ideas into a reconceptualization of the role of narrative in forming meaning, a conclusion that seems consistent with the ideas that I discussed in chapter two and the evolution of ideas in epistemology. Finally, Donald's examination of our evolutionary history allows us to understand how narrative might have been fundamental to the creation and structure of consciousness itself. Although I have reservations about some of Bruner and Olson's ideas, taken together, these writers help us understand how the capacities latent in orality have been used historically as a bridge to literacy, and allow us to pose the question of whether these same tools ought to be utilized as a form of scaffolding in classrooms to help our students become more literate.

The imagination, then, is a concept based on a rich history which has roots deep in Western thought. Egan's notions entail not only an understanding of the nature of the imagination itself, and how it has been used by many cultures as an educational tool, but as well, he frames his understanding in the context of a developmental theory that seeks to replace certain misconceptions currently prevalent in educational discourse. Central to Egan's argument is the claim that our current progressivist notions of how children ought to be taught are based on a series of mistakes, beginning with Herbert Spencer, incorporated into educational thought by Dewey, and given a kind of further patina of respectability by the theories of Piaget.

#### **4.2: Spencer, Dewey and Piaget**

Let's begin with a very basic question: how are we to think about childhood development and the its relationship to education? According to progressivist notions, attending to the nature of the child himself/herself must be central to what

we do as teachers. If we think of education merely as inculcating information into the minds of children, then we are treating them as in some sense inert receptacles, and knowledge itself as a kind of material that can be stored like meat in a freezer. But if children change as they grow, if they go through a series of stages of development, much the way the fetus in the womb was thought to recapitulate the evolutionary development of the species, then we need to be sensitive to the nature of that development, and attune our educational enterprise to its unfolding in a natural way.

This kind of thinking, of course, goes back at least as far as Rousseau, whose pivotal work *Emile* (first published 1762) focused on the development of the child as something to be nurtured and respected as a thing undergoing a natural process of transformation. Rousseau's notions, although now perhaps largely forgotten by many in the educational field, continue to influence the way we think of childhood development. If there is an innate unfolding of abilities, if children are not possessed of all of the faculties of adults, but will possess them in the fullness of time, then it would be a mistake to approach children in the same manner we approach adults. Surely we must be sensitive to this process, learn everything possible about its nature, and incorporate our knowledge into a more scientific approach to pedagogy.

Now there is much that is sensible in this view. Children are not merely small adults, and we must take notice of the differences if we are to be effective in our pedagogy. But is it the case that the development of children is a naturally unfolding process, one that can be likened to their bodily maturation? Will children's minds develop just as their bodies do, by the unfolding of some preprogrammed genetic plan? This notion is at the heart of Spencer's ideas regarding education. As Egan shows, Spencer's ideas were located historically at a time when the notion of evolution, both in geology and biology, was becoming

prevalent. Lyell and Darwin had demonstrated that change and growth are fundamental forces in the natural world, a world that could best be understood through a scientific approach, not one founded on tradition and authority. In this regard, at least, Spencer seems to have opened the door to a more liberal and human approach to the manner in which children were being educated. Rather than forcing “irrelevant” facts into disengaged students through coercion, Spencer called for a more humane and progressive process, one which would be founded on utility and efficiency, making education more pleasant for students and teachers alike. From that perspective, modern education has much to thank him for.

Unfortunately, according to Egan, Spencer got it wrong. He made a number of presumptions in his theory of education, presumptions that continue to plague many educators to this day, and which effectively undermine our attempts to make education as truly pleasant and efficient as Spencer would have liked. According to Spencer, education must proceed under the same set of fundamental laws which he believed governed all of creation. His notion was that all of nature progressed from a state of homogeneity to heterogeneity. All things, according to this understanding, begin in a state of undifferentiated similarity, and end in a state of particularity: the One becomes the Many, to use an older terminology. The most simple develops to become the more complex, and this complexification is one of the most basic laws of the universe, underlying the evolution of all phenomena.

In the field of education, Spencer argued, we must attend to the development of the child as it naturally progressed from his/her immediate experiences to the more abstract understandings of the adult. From this perspective, we begin with what is immediate to the child’s experience, and proceed from there to that which is more abstract. Children are thought to have little capacity for generalization, so education, at least in the formative years, ought to be concerned with concrete and particular information. Students are to become

self-actualizers, actively engaged in the process of educating themselves, rather than being passive recipients of other people's ideas. If the mind has a natural predisposition to grow in a certain manner, then the best kind of education presents ideas and information as they become necessary for that continuing growth. That growth itself will recapitulate the development of humanity historically, so that "primitive" people and children are to be seen as in many ways synonymous in their understanding of the world.

If we think back to the work of Levi-Strauss, however, we can already begin to see some problems with this analogy between so-called "primitive" people and children. Aside from raising the specter of racism in this patronizing view of other human cultures, the notion that children and "primitive people" are similar in their development is simply not supported by empirical studies. There may be a sense in which the mind of the child recapitulates the development of human beings historically -- in fact, Egan's theory itself depends upon just such a recapitulation. But that developmental sequence has less to do with our epistemological orientation, and more to do with the development of cognitive tools as a consequence of our cultural embeddedness. Even Dewey was somewhat dubious about the implications of recapitulation, recognizing that it also entailed the weight of the past imposing upon the future.

This view of the developmental sequence of human consciousness and learning as a naturally occurring phenomena, however, was taken up by Dewey and incorporated into educational pedagogy, as well as by Piaget, who made Spencer's notions even more respectable through the creation of what appeared to be a scientific basis for these ideas. Dewey's notions of the aims of education can be traced back to a number of his seminal works, such as *Education and Experience* (1938) and *Democracy and Education* (1916). For good reason, Dewey's ideas have influenced generations of educators, for his focus on the child

and his/her experiences has done much to humanize our approach to children. But the influence of Spencer on Dewey's notion of education has also created much that is problematic in the way in which we approach education in terms of both methodology and content. Nor have the ideas of Piaget been of as much help as educators may currently think. It is true that by ushering in the notion of cognitive psychology, Piaget helped break the stranglehold of Skinnerian behaviourism that had turned learning into a form of conditioning. But if Egan is correct, Piaget's notions of the stages of development that children must go through, from pre-operational to formal operational, may have done much to "dumb down" the curriculum in the primary and elementary years, making further development in senior high and beyond more and more problematic (Egan, 2002, p. 143).

But this notion of human growth and development may be simply incorrect in any case, so that even if we were to ignore Spencer's notions of recapitulation, we may still find the rest of the theory untenable for other reasons. Suppose that instead of a naturally occurring process that does not require much in the way of adult intervention, the development of the mind is not in fact much like the development of the body at all. It is true that the brain is part of the body, and no one doubts that the brain needs the proper nutrients to grow in a natural manner. But is the mind only the brain? Does it naturally develop in accordance with some genetic inheritance, or does it require very careful nurturing? And if the latter is the case, what kind of nurturing ought the educational system to provide, and upon what theory ought such an influence to be based?

Egan begins to dismantle Spencer's ideas of human mental maturation by examining the implicit notions which inform his psychological theory. According to Spencer, the human brain has a natural disposition to learn, and that innate disposition allows it to construct an understanding of the world from the clues provided by the environment. The child is thought to be in a state of complete

cognitive incoherence. Gradually, however, that confusion is replaced by a more and more coherent understanding as the child utilizes its innate abilities to construct the world around it. But this is a somewhat curious picture, for on the one hand, the mind is thought to contain an active principle that allows it to organize the apparently incoherent input that it is receiving from the environment. On the other hand, however, it apparently need only passively accept the imprint of the environment in order to continue the inevitable process of maturation.

The aim of education, from this perspective, is to follow the lead established by the child. If children grow from a concrete, immediate understanding of the world, then teaching ought to begin with what is nearest the child and proceed to what is furthest away, moving from the experience of the child to the more abstract universals appreciated by the adult mind. Rote learning was thought to be a bad thing, as it forced the child's mind to accept the form of the words, without regard to their meaning. The curriculum itself should be one that focuses on what is useful in life, skills and knowledge of practical value, not abstractions and arcane knowledge such as Latin which, according to Spencer, was a kind of affectation among the educated classes. Everything which was based on "science" was thought to represent what would be most truly useful, a notion of education to be found at the heart of Dewey's ideas, and developed further by strains of progressivist education. Learning was to be empirical, as this tied together both the natural process by which children were thought to learn -- through discovery -- and the most useful thing which they could learn -- the scientific approach to life.

Of course, this raised another essential issue: even given that we have a correct view of how the human mind develops (if we can even generalize about the process), we are still left with the question of what ought to be taught. According to Spencer, much of the curriculum current at the time (the late 19th century) was useless. History was thought to be essentially beyond the capacities

of children in their early years, and to be useless to them except when it could reflect social and economic concepts which could make sense of current events. This dismissal of the value of history for young children was supported by Dewey, who believed that children should first be taught what is of practical value, and with the “experiences learners already have” (Dewey, 1963, p. 74).

But this vision of the curriculum in terms of both methodology and content is challenged by more recent understandings of how the human mind actually develops and matures. In place of Spencer’s notion that the child is existing in a state of utter confusion, but endowed with an innate capacity to sort through the welter of stimuli to establish increasingly more and more complex understandings, Egan points to more recent research that suggests that children are able to sort out fairly complex aspects of their environments quite early. Studies based on relative attention paid by babies to different forms of stimuli indicate that infants, from a fairly early and prelinguistic age, are able to make sense of their environments in a manner previously thought impossible. Egan cites a number of studies in this regard which seem to demonstrate that what is innate in children is not so much a general capacity to learn, but what appears to be a capacity to learn particular kinds of things about the environment in a particular way. In other words, there may not be an ability to learn that naturally develops, but a biologically programmed method of attaining abilities in particular areas that cannot so easily be transferred to others. What general learning ability we do possess does not necessarily transfer to more particular tasks very easily. This is contrary to the view of both Spencer and Piaget, who held that children have a core area of development that is common, and which develops naturally in accordance with innate rules. From this perspective, learning to walk and learning to read ought to be part of the same kind of general ability. Clearly, however, they are not.

The implication from more recent research is that what is appropriate in terms of childhood development with regard, for example, to the acquisition of oral language may not be the same kind of learning mechanism upon which we may draw in teaching any skill at all. At the same time, if we truly understood the processes that are brought to bear by the child as he or she learns language, and were able to extend that kind of learning appropriately, we may indeed be able to improve education. If we do not begin with the presupposition that this kind of development is innate, but instead see it as the gradual accumulation of a set of skills by the child immersed in a cultural context, based upon a biological frame that allows for very complex and even abstract responses to the world, then we have the basis for a theory that simultaneously takes into account the most fruitful elements of the notions of development, without the drawbacks of a recapitulation theory that compares the child's mind to that of more "primitive" people, or a notion of spontaneous development which is not amenable to change. And if children are not hampered by a lack of capacity to form abstractions, nor unable to connect ideas that do not form part of their immediate environments, then many of the assumptions behind childhood education, assumptions that have been laid down from the time of Spencer, Dewey, and Piaget, may in fact be hindering children's development more than helping them. This is the place where we need to begin to reconsider our most fundamental attitudes, ideas and practices, and theories regarding how the mind of the child develops.

#### **4.3: Egan's Theory of Childhood Development**

It is from this set of issues that Egan begins to construct his own theory of development, a theory which draws from both the recent advances in our understanding of the mind as an evolutionarily developed biological organ, as well

as from notions concerning the influence of the cultural context in which the child matures, ideas consistent with the work of Vygotsky and other sociocultural theorists. Furthermore, Egan's theory has the advantage of being able to draw from a rich historical base concerning the nature of the imagination, as well as the anthropological and biological insights which recent research affords. Egan's theory posits that children begin their development with what he terms Somatic understanding, understanding of the world derived from their bodily interactions with it. They then develop what Egan terms Mythic understanding, the kind of understanding based on the tools of orality. Depending on the cultural milieu, they can then develop Romantic understanding, in which they have the basic tools of literacy. From that they may develop the Philosophic type of understanding, which involves the capacity to think more abstractly, to use, as Egan puts it, "systematic theoretical thinking" (1997, p. 105) and finally, they may develop Ironic understanding, which allows for flexibility in our worldviews. I shall discuss each of these types of understanding in more detail shortly.

In some regards, Egan's notions resemble the ones he critiques. Underlying his notions of development, for example, is a theory of recapitulation, but this time a theory consistent with the work of Levi-Strauss, Cassirer, Havelock, Ong, Donald and others. Egan's theory of recapitulation takes into account the mind's embeddedness in a sociocultural, historical context, one informed by the tools that have been developed over the course of time by the culture itself. Egan's notion, in distinction to the Piagetian developmental model usually employed as a background assumption in most educational methodologies, is that students can, depending on the cultural milieu, progress through the Somatic to the Mythic to the Romantic types of understanding without leaving behind the earlier stages. This implies, of course, that unlike the Piagetian idea of development, we never actually outgrow the previous types. They are always operating within us, so that various

types of understanding can interact to produce much richer, more nuanced understandings of the world. Egan's theory of recapitulation is here a dynamic, rather than a static picture of the human psyche.

Furthermore, according to Egan, this movement from type to type recapitulates the development of Western culture historically<sup>2</sup>. Egan describes each of these types of understanding in Vygotskian terms as "mediational tools" that are developed through the context of the culture in which one is embedded as he or she develops. We accumulate these tools as we mature. From this conceptual framework, education consists not simply of accumulating facts about the world, but in developing the cognitive tools that have been handed down as part of our heritage. From this perspective, we cannot simply accept the psychological framework of the child as a "given," but as itself shaped by the process of education to allow for further development. Egan argues that we ought to model our educational system on the notion of bringing students through the different stages through which the culture as a whole has moved. To some extent, we all operate on these different stages at different times. However one of the implications of this model is that each type of understanding needs to be well developed to ensure that students will be able to take advantage of the next kind of understanding as they mature (Egan, 1997, p. 4 ). From this perspective, education can be seen to be the nurturing of those tools not only as part of the child's heritage, but as a necessary precursor to learning what it means to be a member of that culture in the deepest possible way. Children become members of the culture not simply by learning facts about it, but by internalizing the cultural

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It is important not to confuse this notion of recapitulation with some standard division of Western history into eras or periods. The movement from the Mythic to the Romantic types of understanding, for example, has little to do with the Romantic Period, but instead refers to the way in which people make sense of their world when they have at their disposal a certain set of cognitive tools. However, the term is not entirely capricious. Egan uses the term "Romantic understanding" because of its connection to ideas that were important to Romantic consciousness, such as metaphor, revolt and idealism and so on.

tools that the culture has developed over centuries. Egan's is a cultural-historical theory because it sees the development of the mind as necessarily following in the path of the culture of which the child is a part. Children go through the process of being enculturated by undergoing the same historical developmental sequence that the culture itself did over many years.

This is why Egan is critical, at times, of progressivist notions that assume that children have a "natural" developmental process that will unfold without much interference from adults. Asking whether material is developmentally appropriate misses the point that the child's mind is made ready for material precisely by the manner in which he or she is mediated into the use of the cognitive tools of the culture. As Levi-Strauss has shown, children's minds are quite able to deal with abstractions from a very early age. Rather than assuming that the mind of the child is in a "primitive" state, somehow unable to form abstractions or to make generalizations, Egan begins with the notion that the mind of the child is in a Mythic state, that is, one that is as yet uninformed by literacy, but powerfully affected by the nature of language itself. As I have previously shown, Donald has argued that mythic culture grows from a process of representation through language use, a process which integrates knowledge, and in the process, produces consciousness. It is in this sense that the mind of a child and the mind of a member of an oral culture can be seen as similar: not in what they are lacking, but in fact in what they share, a certain kind of consciousness about the world.

Previous to the development of this kind of understanding, of course, is Somatic understanding: that kind of prelinguistic grasp of the world which is equally fundamental to our capacity to make meaning. This is the level at which our first experiences of the world are mediated by our own senses and perceptions of physical objects as existing in relationship to ourselves in space, and upon which our actions have effects in time. We do not construct our understanding from a set

of disembodied theories about the world held in a conscious and decontextualized manner. Instead, we are prepared for meaning making by our early experiences on a very deep level. Our image schemas, if Johnson and Lakoff are correct, create a prelinguistic level of consciousness that is essential for all later meaning making, a process itself that depends upon metaphoric understanding.

This ability to create the basis for meaning from our early experiences must be hard-wired into us, or it could never, in a sense, be “booted up” to form language. This is reminiscent of Cassirer’s problem of how categories can be formed without language, the same kind of philosophic problem that so confounded later Enlightenment thinkers such as Hume and Kant. But if the basis of meaning making is prelinguistic, if we are in some sense genetically programmed to be able to perform many of the basic operations necessary for language, then the problem is less intractable. The problem for educators, of course, is that this genetic, prewired ability lifts us into language rather easily, but does not necessarily pave the way into print literacy. As Egan points out (1997, p. 36) our problem in education is to find a way to get as much use out of our genetic abilities as we can before relying completely on our generalized learning capacity, a capacity which is not well suited to learning specifics such as reading and writing.

#### **4.4: Mythic Understanding**

It is upon this Somatic basis, then, that the Mythic, oral consciousness is formed, a mind capable of many of the feats of the more literate mind, and in fact having at its command many of the latent capacities that will form the basis of literacy itself. How does the mind operate at this age; what tools of orality does it have at its command that we can tap into most fruitfully in developing the groundwork for literacy? The Mythic level is the period during which children first

start developing rudimentary skills based on their oral abilities. Egan lists these abilities, such as our use of abstract binary opposites, our ability to use metaphor, our capacity to form images from words, our interest in patterns, and rhythm, and of course one of the most essential tools, story (which becomes narrative in *Romantic Understanding*). These are the tools that we have at our disposal as speakers of a language, any language. As Egan points out, these are the tools by which we “do” language, and as such, they cannot be easily dispensed with.

Abstract binary opposites, for example, could be criticized as setting up false dichotomies, dichotomies which have been used in the past to oppress certain groups. But by becoming aware of our tendency to form such irrational dichotomies, we may have a chance to overcome them. What we cannot do is dispense with them: they are part of the way in which language structures meaning for its user. “Up” and “down,” “left” and “right,” “front” and “back” for example are basic ways of organizing space. We use the notion of difference as well as similarity in forming categories, as Lakoff (1980) has argued, and without categories, it would be very difficult to structure language at all. Abstract binary opposites help students to organize their ideas into categories which form a meaningful tension between them: good and bad, right and wrong, truth and falsehood may be simplistic from an adult perspective, but for young children, they have a powerful psychological impact, and offer a means by which the diversity of experience may be made more understandable.

Knowing that we use this cognitive tool of binary opposition, then, leads us to ask why it is not utilized more effectively in school as a means of helping students organize their ideas. Of course, we would want to avoid making an illegitimate use of abstract binary opposites by creating false dichotomies. But we ought not to avoid using a tool as powerful as abstract binary opposites because we believe either that children can't think abstractly, or that we are in danger of

creating false dichotomies. In fact, it might be more appropriate to argue that unless we utilize this tool, we are in danger of failing to help students develop their powers of abstraction through teaching them to use this method of thinking. They will employ it anyway, but perhaps actually employ it incorrectly without appropriate adult guidance, and develop it inappropriately and inadequately. Incorporating Abstract binary opposites into our teaching methodology not only helps students grasp the fundamental structure of certain concepts, but allows them to develop their capacity for abstract thought itself, especially when it is combined with other tools, such as metaphor.

As we have seen from the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is essential as a means of making meaning. It is the process by which we activate our image schemas, without which deep understanding is impossible. Metaphor helps students make connections from that with which they are familiar, to other, usually more abstract concepts. It is a ladder upon which we can build ideas from one level to another, opening the doors to new possibilities along the way. The imagination itself is characterized by the use of these elements in its structure, for that which is imaginable is usually thought of as that which can be imaged. As Egan points out, "It is hard to discuss mental images without bringing in the imagination in general" (1997, p. 61). These images can have powerful emotional and well as cognitive meaning for the people experiencing them, and it is the emotional connection which is part of what allows the cognitive meaning to be actualized. Young children are actually very adept at this kind of thinking. Egan argues, in fact, that it is a capacity that we tend to lose as we attain a more print-oriented literacy. He argues that children are very fluent in metaphor use when they are young, but tend to lose that ability as they age (1997, p. 56). It is a capacity that we do not utilize as fully as we might in education. Metaphor has a power to fuel creativity in a way that literal language seems to lack. It allows us to hold up otherwise disparate ideas in a

“meaning space” in which previously unrecognized similarities are allowed to come to the fore. Or perhaps it is more correct to say that metaphor does not reveal previously existing similarities as much as create new connections which previously did not exist. This would make metaphor a source of real creativity, just as Sartre required for true human freedom. Egan even argues that it is central to the “empowerment of the individual” (1997, p. 56).

Often metaphoric comparisons take the form of images which capture the essence of meaning in visual form. A very powerful tool for learning is to have students create visual metaphors of their understanding, then to have them compare and contrast their metaphors with other students, or to produce pieces of writing in which they explain their ideas. Images can evoke very powerful emotional connections, and can be an important aid to memory. As Egan points out, images are rarely discussed in teacher training programs, and although student teachers are given a repertoire of strategies for helping students to organize their ideas, they are rarely taught techniques for using guided imagery (for example) to help students develop deeper understanding. There has been some work done on the use of imagery by those interested in learning styles, and many teachers use visual organizers such as mind maps or webs. Few, however, have students close their eyes and picture an idea, or have students create collages, for example, as a means of displaying understanding. This remains an area of great interest and equally great potential. One of the most effective ways to utilize imagery, of course, is to create a series of visual pictures which themselves create a story. It is natural that students are interested in story<sup>3</sup>. I previously mentioned Mark Turner (1996) argument that our minds are essentially narrative in

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Egan distinguishes between story as a tool of Mythic Understanding, and narrative as a tool of Romantic Understanding. I employ the term "narrative" here in the general sense of any form of story making.

their structure, so that we find the processing of information in a narrative form to be natural and engaging. Whether one accepts that our minds are *only* narrative in their nature is not necessary. The fact is that narrative is a powerful means by which we are able to understand the meaning of our experiences. Narrative itself employs many of the other basic tools, such as imagery, metaphor, and patterning, tools by which we naturally make sense of the world. But although we teach students to read and write by employing stories, we often don't make the connection to teaching other content using that same natural fit. Egan asks us to imagine teaching other subjects by means of narrative as well. It is clear that history, for example, gives ample opportunity for this kind of treatment. But what is the "story" behind teaching science topics such as the environment, or fractions for example, that makes them alive for students in the classroom? One of the most powerful means of engaging student interest and emotional connection is through the use of "true" stories that help demonstrate a point, make a concept clearer, or more meaningful. Stories seem to have the capacity to use particular, discrete instances to convey abstract ideas. The "theme" of a story, for example, is often more than simply a moral summed up in a phrase. It may instead convey deep messages reflecting on the nature of ethical responsibility, and the formation of the self. Students are able to readily identify with characters in a story, and often important ideas which would remain inert knowledge if taught in a decontextualized manner become living, emotionally engaging experiences, experiences that are not only made easier to remember because they are set in a narrative framework, but in a sense made more meaningful because they connect to children on an emotional, not just cognitive, level.

Connected to this notion of human meaning embodied in narrative is the entire question of how to best utilize students' sense of mystery and wonder. Egan asks us to locate that element within the story, or within the topic, that can most

encourage a sense of awe within the students. This is connected as well to the issue of what is most important about the topic, that is, why we feel it is of value for students to learn about this particular aspect of existence. This is perhaps best done by a series of questions, but not only teacher questions (a common form of classroom dynamic known as the IRE: Initiate, Respond, Evaluate) but focusing on student questions as well. Rarely do teachers begin a unit by asking students what they would like to know about a topic; instead, most teachers have already decided (or curriculum providers have decided for them) what aspects of the topic ought to be taught. But if we turn the focus instead on the issues that most engage students, the rest may fall into place of its own accord once the students' interest has been evoked.

From this perspective, the teaching of history takes on new significance, for it is the narrative in which all of our individual lives are embedded. This is the context in which the self is contextualized, and Egan talks of the manner in which we come to know ourselves by focusing on others and their experiences. The current curriculum, particularly in social studies, tends to focus on the immediate environment of the child, rather than examining the world of the "other". This has the unfortunate effect of potentially making the world of the child seem like the "norm" against which all others are to be understood and judged, in turn leaving little room for imaginative exploration of other possibilities. Egan argues that we need to reconceive of the curriculum not as a set of facts which we are to have children memorize, but as a series of great stories which they need to learn if they are to develop their capacities to the fullest. And that development begins most fundamentally with the Mythic kind of understanding.

#### 4.5 Romantic Understanding

The next kind of understanding, the Romantic, is situated between the Somatic and Mythic kinds of understanding on the one hand, and the Philosophic and Ironic on the other. As we move beyond the Mythic to the Romantic, we begin to emphasize even more strongly that human connection that we can have with knowledge. Egan (1997) discusses Herodotus' *Histories* in terms of the great deeds of the past, the *mega ergon*. This kind of dramatic rendering gave *The Histories* a psychological impact that rivaled the power of the ancient myths in the oral tradition. Herodotus managed to capture what it is about history that makes it come alive for us, that compels our attention. The notion of history as a recording of great deeds captures the human imagination in a way that a mere recitation of facts never could. The reader or hearer is, in Egan's words, made a "kind of witness" to the events of history. The events become internalized in a manner different from the manner in which school usually operates, a manner that connects ideas and concepts more deeply with students' experiences, while simultaneously developing their cognitive tools in a manner that typical classroom experiences rarely do.

One of the things that most engages students at this age, approximately seven years old and onwards, is an exploration of the limits of reality. By this means they are actually determining the boundaries of their own existence, and coming to terms with the nature of what it means to be a human being in the world. At this age children are deeply interested in things such as the *Guinness Book of World Records*, and love collecting things and organizing them in categories. These are attempts to determine the limits of the world, and to organize its contents into some manageable form. Egan writes:

If this autonomous reality were infinitely extensive, we would be infinitely insignificant. By discovering the real limits of the world and of human experience, we form a connection that enables us to establish some security and to establish proportionate meaning within it (1997, p. 85).

Egan asks teachers to emphasize the heroic qualities which potentially exist in any encounter that humans have with the world. By identifying with heroes, students in a sense are able to gain the confidence that they need when confronted by the potentially very threatening and alienating world that reality can represent. In fact, it is this notion of knowledge as being a human construct, and not a disembodied assemblage of facts and figures, that brings life and meaning to this kind of education. The Baconian notion of seeing the facts of the world “precisely as they are” has not proven to be very easy, and in fact, is the fundamental problem that underlies most Positivist notions of epistemology, sometimes called the fallacy of the immaculate perception. Ultimately, Egan’s point is that the full development of literacy, beyond the basic ability to read and write, entails the development of every type of understanding. Rather than focusing on decoding skills and a simplified notion of meaning, we need to think more broadly about what literacy is from this early level onwards, and what it means for the development of human capacities beyond the utilitarian notions of literacy as being merely economically liberating.

Another important cognitive tool that is powerful at this age is the students’ sense of idealism and revolt. As students begin to form their adult identities, they come across aspects of the adult world that seem to be paradoxical and hypocritical. As their desire for freedom grows, and is often met by adult restrictions and control, they often begin to imagine a world in which their desire for freedom and improvement in the human condition could be realized. As Egan points out (2005) this struggle against conformity and convention has

characterized many of the most famous people in history, and their struggles to create a new way of looking at the world. Consider the work of Galileo, or Darwin, for example, and the way in which their unorthodox ideas were initially resisted, but ultimately triumphed. Teachers who can frame their lessons in terms of revolt and idealism do much to encourage identification with the subject matter, and to emotionally engage students as well.

If we look at students in grades four to six, we see that they are moving from the Mythic to the Romantic kind of understanding. When students operate with the Mythic kind of understanding, they are willing to accommodate the fantastic with complete credulity. They believe in flying dragons and witches without any problem. As Egan points out (1997), this belief in magic persists in many people, even into adulthood. Consider how many people continue to pay attention to horoscopes and fortune telling, for example. At this level children are beginning to move from an oral use of language to what we usually consider more fully developed literacy, the ability to read and write.

But when they are operating with the Romantic kind of understanding, a new interest in reality as it actually is begins to emerge. The Romantic kind of understanding is characterized by deeper narrative engagement with the subject, an interest in vivid and exotic detail, and a focus on the heroic qualities demonstrated by the main characters, and in some sense, a transcendence of that reality. In the Romantic framework, we explore human strengths and weaknesses, the wonders of the world, and the extremes of reality. Romantic understanding has to do with developing a personal connection to the world, with humanizing knowledge. At the same time, the Mythic kind of understanding remains as a resource to be utilized in developing literacy. We continue to use and extend the oral toolkit while moving from one kind to the next, so that these skills are

interwoven as students' interests develop and change, rather than being abandoned as students mature, and thus being left underdeveloped.

For example, part of the problem with the way in which we tend to teach much of the curriculum in today's schools is that we move rapidly from a narrative to an expository form of presentation, thinking that students ought to be able to deal with more abstract forms of understanding. But while it is true that they are developing their powers of abstraction, it is also the case that they remain interested in narrative because it presents ideas in terms of human action. Like most people, students are more likely to be engaged by a good story than by a dry presentation of facts. That is why the *Guinness Book of World Records* is so popular, because it ties the facts about the world into a context of limits and extremes, which are much more interesting than the rather prosaic details of most children's lives. It humanizes the limits of the world by presenting them in human form, in terms of what real people are able to do.

Furthermore, as Egan claims (1997, p. 86), we often begin with what children presumably already know about the world and move from there to explore what they don't know. Now at first this seems like a reasonable process, for it would make some sense to build from the known to the unknown. But a different way of managing the process might be to begin with what is strange, unusual and exotic, to begin, as it were, at the fringes of the topic, and to clarify the overall picture as we go along, rather than filling it in piece by piece, like a jigsaw puzzle. Egan argues that both ways of looking at the learning process are in fact valuable, but that the notion of a large picture which comes more and more into view as it develops seems to offer the most in terms of creating meaning.

In fact, it is the question of meaning-making that ought to be uppermost in our minds. When the curriculum is presented in a decontextualized, sterile manner, or as something that is finished and prepackaged, it loses its connection to

students' lives, and thus is unable to stir within them a sense of engagement or response. Imaginative approaches to education ultimately attempt to connect students to knowledge in a new way. It is not just that students are learning in a different way, but that they are engaging the subject matter in a deeper, fuller manner, that ought to be of interest here. What is central to the program of imaginative education is the issue of understanding, as opposed to simply remembering information.

Romantic understanding is of great importance in education, because it moves students beyond the threshold of literacy. It is here that students are first developing their skills, based on orality, and beginning to extend those skills into an understanding of the world. It is here that students are first using the tools of literacy to explore not only the world around them, but to develop as well as sense of the autonomous self. And it is here that children are really beginning to develop a sense of the expanse and nature of the external world, and of their place within it.

But accompanying this gradual development is also loss. Egan speaks of the loss of the vividness of childhood sensation, of that sense of connection to the world that is gradually replaced by the mundane light of adulthood. But as Egan hastens to point out, that loss is not complete; the lost world of childhood wonder can be in a sense recreated by the more adult understanding of the Philosophic level, that age when people can be enraptured by ideas as they were once enraptured by sensation. Here the imagination of youth is enriched by the power of rationality, so that the fully developed adult mind can participate in both. Nor are we to see imagination and reason in conflict, as so often has been the case in Western thought. Instead, we ought to view the imagination as providing the material upon which the more fully informed adult mind can operate to conceive of new possibilities, preventing the mind from being trapped in a limited view of the world. Egan even argues that it is because schooling currently is unsuccessful at

developing the Romantic kind of understanding that so few students seem capable of moving on to the Philosophic type, and so remain in some sense perennially underdeveloped:

Thus we might want to see whether certain forms of rational inquiry can be devised for the middle school years that stimulate and develop Romantic understanding that do not prematurely try to exercise a kind of theoretic thinking for which the prerequisites are not developed (1997, p. 97).

Romantic understanding is a process of gradual transformation, a process that creates the potential for the more fully realized possibilities of the Philosophic and Ironic kinds of understanding which follow.

This is the point where we can begin to see how Egan's theory is tied to the discussion of the previous chapters. His recapitulation theory asks us to consider following the same kind of general developmental scheme in our educational programs that our culture itself has followed, developing at each "stage" the necessary cognitive tools for the next type. From Cassirer we can draw the lesson that Mythic understanding provides the basis for the more elaborated forms of understanding that come with literacy, that there is not an unbridgeable chasm between the two modes of thought. Furthermore, he allows us to understand how mythic thought is linked to the very origin of language itself, and provides an insight into Egan's link between Mythic and Romantic understanding on those terms. He also helps us understanding the importance of metaphor in meaning making, and raises the issue of the importance of categorization for human thought.

Levi-Strauss develops these ideas further, and shows that the totemic consciousness of premodern people can be seen as a step towards our own methods of categorization in literate society, particularly as these categories operate through the creation of binary opposites, a notion developed in Egan's theory as a cognitive tool essential for certain forms of meaning making. He also

points to the importance of images as means of working with ideas, although he does argue that imagery used by premodern people never actually develop into modern notions of scientific concepts. Goody, Havelock, and Ong develop these ideas further by showing how literate consciousness is built up from these premodern beginnings, giving implicit support for Egan's developmental notion of cultural recapitulation. Havelock shows how the seeds of literacy are present in oral cultures, and were used to pass down cultural heritage through rhyme, metre, imagery, and narrative, all of which Egan has incorporated into his notion of cognitive tools. Ong's focus on the development of consciousness, and Olson's discussion of the technology of the literate mind, also support Egan's ideas of how education ought to recapitulate the development of cognitive tools in order to be truly effective.

What is missing from this discussion, however, is the connection to the philosophic history of the imagination, and its effect of the very understanding of what constitutes knowledge, a discussion that leads to my own notions of the imagination and its role in education. Before turning to the research component then, I would like to spend some time discussing my own notions of how a focus on the imagination can effect change in education.

#### **4.6: Personal Reflections**

Before we discuss how this kind of understanding might be developed in a normal classroom, I would like to spend some time attempting to integrate some of the ideas covered in the last three chapters, and this one, with my own view of imagination and its place in education. I have spent some time trying to provide an overview of literacy research, the philosophy of imagination and its connection to epistemology, the notion of cognitive tools as cultural modes of information

transmission, and Egan's view of the imagination as a necessary component of teaching. All of this theoretical context required a historical/philosophical examination of how others have seen and used imagination. My own views, although obviously consistent with what I have been examining, however, have a slightly different focus.

I have already discussed my perspective on the successes -- and failings -- of our current views of literacy, and what I feel is the importance of adopting a new approach to education based on Egan's notion of cognitive tools. Egan's approach offers much that recommends itself to the practicing classroom teacher. By making fairly specific suggestions about how the imagination can be brought into the classroom context, he offers a valuable opportunity to cross the chasm that often seems to separate theory from practice. Classroom teachers need specific methods and strategies through which to implement theory on a practical basis, and Egan's list of cognitive tools does much to make that implementation easier by providing both a theoretically grounded framework and vocabulary by which we can discuss imagination in a more nuanced fashion. The tools he discusses also allow teachers to create specific strategies in order to facilitate concrete application of these ideas.

That being said, my own interest goes beyond simply implementing a set of practices that have as their ultimate purpose the creation of a type of literacy that more or less resembles the one currently in place. Egan has stated that he wishes students to be more "flexible" in their thinking, and I also agree that this ought to be a central goal of our notion of literacy. What I would like to do, however, is to discuss how we might think about this notion of "flexibility" in the context of some of the philosophic ideas that I have previously discussed.

As a teacher, one of my overriding concerns has always been the issue of whether education has as its ultimate purpose the liberation or oppression of those

who are its recipients. In that sense, the kind of knowledge, and the transformation which it can effect in those who receive it, are at the core of my concern. Writing the Foreword to the 1970 edition of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Richard Shaull says:

There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes "the practice of freedom," the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (p. 15).

Needless to say, I am in almost complete agreement with this statement, my only reservation being the rather black and white dichotomy that Shaull seems to be proposing. Be that as it may, the notion that we need to deal creatively with the world in order to liberate ourselves as human beings is central to my own values as an educator, and for that reason, I see my own application of Egan's ideas as being based on philosophic as well as psychological grounds. By this I mean that I am interested not only in developing more "literate" human beings, where "literate" means capable of decoding text and responding to it in a coherent fashion, but in how text, and students' interactions with it, can be used to transform individuals on a deep level. By "deep" here I mean changing the perceptions and attitudes of students in a meaningful way, a way that affects how they interact with others. When Egan speaks of humanizing knowledge, for example, this is in accord with my own ideas about the central purpose of education. To my mind, liberating human beings and making knowledge more "human" are necessary components of educational practice; one cannot successfully be accomplished without the other. This is because knowledge which is seen as simply a means to some end outside of the purposes of the knower acts to disconnect human beings from themselves, and from each other. Once again I am reminded of Putnam's

point about pushpin and poetry. In my view, poetry is superior to pushpin because of its connection to the human world, and if knowledge does not aid in the meeting of human needs, then it can easily become a tool for oppression. Putnam's claim that the imagination can be used as a vehicle for helping us understand how certain types of knowledge are in some sense "superior" to others leads to the conclusion that our understanding of the world has deep ethical consequences, and that ignoring the implications of what we know, how we come to know it, and the purposes to which knowledge is put, is deeply problematic. The problem of Objectivism as Putnam describes it is not merely that it is a fundamentally flawed epistemological position, but also that it has implications for the ends to which knowledge is put, and how it affects the people who hold this kind of epistemological position. When I examine the history of the imagination, then, I am interested in more than how education has been used in the past as a means of inculcating values and information. These are means, and means are important, to be sure. But my more central concern is what kinds of ends we are achieving.

A good place to begin this discussion is to think what a classroom would "look like" if it held as a central notion of knowledge one more in accordance with Putnam's point. Where Egan speaks of using the imagination as a means of improving literacy, I would like to add in the notion of developing the cognitive tools themselves so that the imagination is further enhanced through being used as a means to a different, although also valuable, end. What does it look like, for example, if we begin to think of knowledge not as the only the possession of the culture, or of the teacher, but as something that can also be constructed through the interaction of students and texts? This notion of "constructivism," based on Vygotskian notions of childhood development rather than Piagetian ones, has gained support from such writers as Suzzane Miller (2003), especially in the area of literacy development. Of course, we need to avoid the pitfalls of progressivism,

that is, the assumption that anything that students create is of value because it is an act of creation. Using cognitive tools in order to appreciate the best that has been thought and written is also an important end of education, and we must be mindful of Egan's argument regarding the often conflicting ends of education currently being pursued with limited success already. But of course his point is that by focusing on the means of using cognitive tools rather than on mutually exclusive ends, we avoid just such pitfalls.

This notion of developing students' capacity to use cognitive tools not only as a means of improving literacy, but also as a means of developing their imaginations is also tied to how we might come to see knowledge itself, as a more provisional thing than it may currently be held to be by some educators. In many classrooms, knowledge appears to have the status of a "given," something that neither the teacher nor the students can challenge. This leads, in my view, to a kind of "hardening of the categories" where students come to accept knowledge as a kind of absolute handed down from on high. This is one of the reasons why I spent some time in chapters two and three discussing the issue of category formation, because I see it as central to how consciousness itself is built. If education cannot penetrate to this level of the self of the student, then the kind of "deep" transformation of which I am speaking may not be possible.

Trotman's notion of the value of knowledge in helping to form an imaginative "lifeworld" perhaps captures what I am trying to say here, a world of possibilities which draws upon not only the conceptual understanding, but upon the students' emotions, experiences, hope and dreams. What I am suggesting is not merely taking a more critical approach, in a Platonic sense, to the beliefs and values currently held. That is perhaps a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for what I am proposing. A creative, imaginative approach to education, using the cognitive tools, would involve students reconsidering the categories, as well as

considering the human connection between themselves and what they are studying. In fact, that is the basis of how metaphor itself operates, a reconceptualization of how experience can be organized and named. It requires a capacity for what Fisher is calling for, an imaginative engagement that thinks of possibilities in the way that leads to wisdom, and not just knowledge. Nor does this approach necessarily entail a rejection of cultural values and ideas. Critical examination and a creative, imaginative response may rearrange ideas without necessarily doing them irreparable violence. We need to think of knowledge as a human construct, not as something that exists in some timeless Platonic realm. Knowledge is made by and for human beings, not the other way around. It is not a bed of Procrustes for us to measure up to, but a tool, and perhaps even a toy, for our use.

This concept of knowledge as a kind of toy as well as tool is, I think, consistent with Egan's ideas when he writes of the Ironic type of understanding as one that eliminates the inflexible certainty that seems to accompany certain kinds of orientations towards knowledge:

The central constituent of irony is a high degree of reflexiveness on our own thinking and a refined sensitivity to the limited and crude nature of the conceptual resources we can deploy in trying to make sense of the world (1997, p. 155).

I have chosen as a central image and metaphor for this thesis the idea of imagination as a key for opening the doors to Dreamland. The notion that imagination is a kind of dreamworld I have borrowed from Northrop Frye, whose seminal work *The Educated Imagination* (1963) investigated the way in which the imagination can inform our understanding not only of ourselves, but of the world in which we live. Frye speaks of a dreamer who falls into a dream not based on a private, Freudian subconscious, but a "deeper dream of man that creates and

destroys his own societies" (p. 43). Frye writes of the literary critic as one who uses critical powers to form a judgment of the work based on his/her powers of perception and taste. But he also speaks of what lies beneath, and yet in some sense, beyond that merely critical reflection, a response that involves our entire being, so that it requires, in that sense, the total possession of the dreamer. Frye's image of the keys to Dreamland is powerfully evocative, I think, of the power of the imagination to unlock that which is hidden, and to bring it to full consciousness.

I have chosen to amend Frye's image of imagination as a key opening a lock, to the image of a key opening the doors to another realm. Like the Romantics whose aesthetic is based on the notion that poetry moves the reader to another type of consciousness, then returns him or her to the "real" world, I am interested in how the imagination can be seen as a power for the transformation of both the individual and society. Keats' notion of negative capability perhaps comes closest to what I am trying to express here, the idea that it is when we are uncertain of the truth of the matter that we are able to be most free in the way in which we approach any subject. In this sense, imagination is not merely a set of tools or teaching methodologies, but a way of living.

The focus of my own research, then is connected to all of these ideas through a focus on narrative as a means of organizing and in a sense "living" the knowledge that the students are examining. In the narrative rubric which I designed specifically for use in this study, I focus not only on the typical elements of narrative, such as development of character, but on elements rarely if ever examined: how do students see themselves, as characters, connected to their experiences in time? How do they see the future unfolding from the present? How does their interior monologue reflect the emotional as well as rational impact of the events as they are unfolding? What kind of ethical connections can students make in terms of passing judgment on the events, and the historical personages involved

in those events? I wish to move the focus away from the knowledge itself as a thing existing somehow "outside" of the students, to something that is becoming a part of who they are through the manner in which they come to "know" it on a deeper level, one that involves them emotionally as well as intellectually. Although I am interested in examining how Egan's cognitive tools can be used to facilitate that end, and whether or not it can achieve the typical goals of literacy, my ultimate aim is to have the students demonstrate a different kind of connection to what they are learning. At this point, it is appropriate to turn to the research itself to see how those aims were realized in practice.

**PART TWO:**  
**IMAGINATIVE EDUCATION IN ACTION**

## Chapter Five: Methodology and Research Questions

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will give a brief overview of the methodology employed in the two studies which I undertook at one of the schools involved in the LUCID project, the assessment instruments used, and the results which I hoped to achieve by using these techniques and instruments. To some extent, the methodology evolved as the studies developed, particularly as I moved from the first, pilot, study, to the second, more focused one. In the first study, my intent was to employ as many assessment instruments as possible in order to examine how students were being affected by the imaginative approach which I was employing. As I was unsure of how the techniques of imaginative education would actually affect the students, I wanted to throw as wide a net as possible to capture whatever results there might be. Some of these assessment instruments were ones that were made available by the classroom teacher, and would have been normally used to assess students' progress whether the study was being conducted or not. Other instruments were ones that I developed myself for the specific purpose of investigating phenomena for which there were no assessment vehicles currently available. This was part of the evolutionary nature of the study, because I began with only a general sense of what I might see as the study progressed, and then sharpened my focus and assessment methods as time went on. There were also issues concerning the separation of the effects of imaginative education, which was conducted in the context of teaching the history of Canada, from the effects of language arts instruction, which focused on novel studies. In the end, these two parts of the curriculum were, to some extent, converging on a set of skills and

abilities, and it became impossible to isolate some of the effects of imaginative education as a separate area of study from some of the language arts objectives.

In a large measure, the research was driven by my discussions with the classroom teacher as she and I began to notice aspects of the students' work which we found important and interesting. As well, however, the development of various aspects of the assessment was driven by my contact with the students themselves as they commented on the process, and as their work began to display certain subtleties which I would not have predicted ahead of time. During the first study, I moved from a general interest in the overall level of literacy in the class to a more specific focus on narrative as a tool for teaching, and a focus on student-written narratives as a tool for learning and assessment.

During the second study, I broadened my focus, on the one hand, to investigate more of the techniques of imaginative education than I had in the first. At the same time, I narrowed my assessment tools, eliminating the standardized, quantitative assessment tools and focusing more on the qualitative ones, and the ones that I had created. In part, this was because I found that standardized assessment, although providing some positive information regarding student progress, was simply not able to deliver the more nuanced information about student progress and responses in which I was primarily interested, such as the students' development of interior monologue, or their ability to sequence time in narrative structures.

In the second study I also attempted to place more emphasis on the voice of the regular classroom teacher. In the first study, she and I had had a number of discussions about outcomes, methods, and assessment criteria. I had done all of the teaching, and she had observed and given me some valuable feedback. On several occasions, she helped by completing engagement rubrics in order to provide some of the data for the study. What was missing, however, was her full

engagement with the techniques of imaginative education, although her regular classroom practice is itself highly imaginative, employing art and story telling on a regular basis. For the second study, I felt it important to have more participation from her in both teaching and assessment. She is also more competent at teaching certain aspects of the curriculum which I wished to integrate into the study, such as the use of art as a vehicle for learning and assessment. For that reason, I also ended the second study with an interview in which I asked for her own views on the use of imaginative education, as a means of triangulation. Using the classroom teacher's perceptions, I was able to add weight to my own observations as I had recorded them in my Journal.

## **5.2: General Methodological Considerations**

The research methodology is primarily based upon a qualitative, naturalistic approach, incorporating as well some quantitative elements in an attempt to create a "thick description" of the class as a whole, as well as of individual students. Guba and Lincoln (1981) point to the multiple "realities" that this paradigm allows the researcher to access, leading to a view of the phenomena under investigation that is multilayered, divergent and interrelated in many ways. It is understanding or *verstehen* that the inquirer seeks, as opposed to a more scientific or singular, convergent view of the "truth". It is assumed in this view that there will be interaction between the inquirer and the "subjects" of inquiry, and that it is important to take the nature of the relationship between the two into account in coming to conclusions. From this perspective, the views of the "data collector" become part of the research material to be collected and analyzed, and form part of the overall picture of the phenomena under investigation. This form of investigation also allows for the participation of others, such as the classroom

teacher, in the investigation. Rather than seeing the objectives of the study as being determined beforehand, they are considered to be in development as the study proceeds, so that by the end, although most if not all of the initial questions may have been answered, new ones, perhaps even more important ones, may have arisen and require further study.

Of course, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative techniques poses some problems of methodological coherence. At the extremes, these two approaches seem to present incommensurable views of what constitutes an appropriate methodology. Hillocks (1992) points to the fundamentally differing world views that are implicit in these approaches. Hillocks' discussion is consistent with my examination, in chapter three, of the contrast between a positivist and more idealist view of the nature of knowledge. He points to four sets of polarities that arise from these differing conceptions of reality, truth, and the nature of evidence and research that naturally flow from them.

Quantitative researchers, according to Hillocks, believe that there is an objectively existing outside world that can be investigated in a neutral manner if the investigators can cleanse their approach of any personal or social biases. They use a correspondence view of truth, where truth is said to adhere to statements that "correspond" to that outside reality. Knowledge becomes publicly available to any other observer who utilizes the same methods, because the same reality is being examined. Thus knowledge obtained in this fashion is generalizable to other cases, and a set of overarching laws can be generated, in which individual cases can be seen to be instances of the interaction of these general laws, a system based on the approach most often taken in the natural sciences since the time of Bacon and Descartes. In this view of the ontological reality behind research paradigms, truth and evidence lead to a clear overall goal for research. For the "realist" (a term which Hillocks prefers to "positivist"), the ultimate goal of the

researchers is prediction: if nature operates on a set of fundamental rules that are knowable, and which can be expressed in the form of statements, mathematical or otherwise, that are precise, then the future can in principle be predicted to any degree of certainty necessary, within the constraint of errors in measurement. Rather like Laplace's claim that he could predict the entire future history of the universe if only he knew the position and velocity of every particle, the quantitative researcher, at the extreme, seeks a kind of perfect knowledge.

In contrast, the qualitative, idealist notion of research methodology differs from the quantitative in significant respects. Here the world is seen not as an objective construct given independently to autonomous minds, but as a field of phenomena which impinge upon each person in a manner that makes him/her intimately linked to the "reality" being investigated. We cannot separate the dancer from the dance, so to speak. For that reason, everyone's perception of "reality" will differ. From this perspective, the notion of "correspondence" makes no sense, as there is not one reality which all observers share. Therefore "truth" is a matter of agreement between observers, not an aspect of reality itself. Where such agreement exists, it offers a tentative, provisional understanding which may be altered by more experience, or by other views.

Following from these diverse assumptions, the goals of the qualitative researcher also differ from the quantitative. Rather than attempting for a final, ultimate picture of reality which will lead to certainty and prediction, the qualitative investigator seeks what Smith (1983) calls "interpretive understanding". This kind of hermeneutic understanding will require that the investigator examine the relationship between the parts of the phenomena under investigation. Because the researcher is linked intimately to the phenomena, then he or she must also attempt to discuss how his or her values and interests have shaped the process of investigation itself. It was for that reason that this thesis begins with a personal

reflection on my experience as a teacher of English, and my own biases concerning the purpose and nature of education, which I have attempted to reveal as this discussion has proceeded, and which became more evident to me as I continued with the study.

Hillocks argues, however, that in spite of these seemingly incommensurable differences in philosophy and the differences in methodology that flow from them, it is possible to reconcile the two views to create a more robust model of research for the social sciences. Hillocks points out that at their logical extremes, neither view seems very convincing or rational. I have discussed elsewhere some of the problems that seem to adhere to the positivist or realist view of "reality". Hillocks points out that the idealist view too has its problems. Taken to an extreme, such a view would mean that observers would forever be in committee meetings to come to some agreement on every aspect of reality, including whether speeding cars on a busy highway actually constituted a danger for someone trying to cross the road (Hillocks' example).

In my discussion in chapter three, of course, I offered a view of the reconciliation between these opposing views that depends upon a metaphoric epistemology, one based on image schemas which allow for both objective and subjective elements. Hillocks' approach, however, is to isolate a number of key elements which both methodologies must address. He points out that quantitative researchers, for example, must still address some aspects of research in a qualitative manner, such as finding problems; explaining the relationship of data to claims; theory building; and explaining particular cases in terms of established knowledge or theory (p. 59). He also argues that qualitative researchers must keep in mind the need to explain procedures, verify observations, and cross-check sources. In other words, both methods of research may have more in common

than a very abstract and general overview of their differing philosophies may at first imply.

My approach, then, has been to employ what I feel to be the most useful aspects of both a qualitative and quantitative approach. I have attempted to incorporate as many differing instruments as possible in order to develop a more nuanced and coherent view of the students' development of literacy, a view that depends upon a notion of literacy that extends the traditional definition. In the next section, I will discuss in more detail the particular instruments used, and the rationale for their use. In the end, what I offer here is at best a tentative, preliminary investigation into the efficacy of imaginative education. Speaking of pilot investigations such as this one, Maxwell (1996) writes:

There is one particular use that pilot studies have in qualitative research that prior research can also accomplish but is much less likely to. This use is to generate an understanding of the concepts and theories held by the people you are studying-- what I have called interpretation. This is not simply a source of additional concepts for your theory . . . instead, it provides you with an understanding of the meaning that these phenomena and events have for the actors who are involved with them, and the perspectives that inform their actions (p. 45).

From this perspective, much of the value of this research has to do not only with attempting to measure whether the students' literacy was developed by the techniques of imaginative education, but the manner in which they responded to those techniques, and how the classroom itself, and the people in it, may have been transformed by the application of this approach. Patti Lather argues that "For researchers with emancipatory aspirations, doing empirical work offers a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that it enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations" (1991, p. 56). In some respects, this may offer some of the most useful information

regarding the overall meaning of imaginative education for those who use it to teach, as well as those who use it to learn. Clearly there is a great deal more that needs to be studied if we are to utilize these concepts to their full potential.

### **5.3: General Research Design**

As part of the development of the study, I drew upon Maxwell's (1996) notions of qualitative research design in order to begin the initial planning. Maxwell isolates five elements in research design which he describes as being in an interactive relationship to each other. These elements are Purposes, Conceptual Context, Research Questions, Methods, and Validity. Each of these elements can be characterized in terms of the issues which each is meant to address. For example, under purposes, Maxwell asks the research designer to ask "What are the ultimate goals of the study?"; "What issues is it intended to illuminate, and what practices will it influence?"; "Why do you wish to conduct it?"; and "Why should we care about the results?" I shall investigate each of these issues, and my tentative answers to them, in the next section.

Furthermore, as Maxwell points out, these elements are not to be utilized in a sequential, linear fashion, but are in an ongoing state of evolution and interaction as the study continues. This is one of the strengths of the qualitative design model, that it allows for great flexibility in the manner in which the research itself unfolds. Rather than being tied to a set of presuppositions about what the phenomena to be studied are, or the instruments to be used for data collection, the qualitative model, as Lincoln and Guba have argued, allows for growth in the primary research instrument to be used: the researcher himself/herself. Beginning with that perspective, then, I shall outline some of the preliminary planning positions which I

took before the research began. In the specific discussion of the studies, I shall then elaborate on how those positions evolved as the studies continued.

#### **5.4: Purposes**

Perhaps the primary question which Maxwell asks the researcher to address is “What is (are) the ultimate goal(s) of this study?” I shall address this question more specifically in chapters six and seven, but it is important to understand that the pilot study was done under the auspices of the LUCID project (Learning for Understanding through Culturally Inclusive Imaginative Development), which is aimed at examining whether the techniques of imaginative education could help Aboriginal students, as well as others, become more engaged in school, and raise their levels of academic achievement (Fettes, 2005). When I began this research, my primary purpose was to investigate two questions. The first of these questions has to do with literacy itself: very simply, does the use of the techniques of imaginative education help students, particularly Aboriginal students, to become more literate? This is obviously a very broad question to ask, and raises other issues such as how literacy is to be measured. One of the first problems to arise in this regard was the question of how literacy itself was to be defined. The standard definition obviously involves the students’ capacity to read and write. But as chapter one has shown, that basic definition is beginning to undergo some challenges. I decided to take the basic definition, however, as a necessary but perhaps not sufficient condition. If imaginative education could not demonstrate its value in developing literacy on this basic level, then its use would be problematic. For that reason, in the pilot study, I decided to use some standardized tests of basic literacy that were already available in a regular classroom setting. I discuss those instruments in more detail in section 5.6.

As part of this study, however, I was interested in asking whether imaginative education did not offer another way of thinking about literacy, just as Egan claims it offers a new way of thinking about education in general. I decided to adopt, as a more broadly-based definition, Egan's claim that literacy is "the set of cognitive tools available to us as we become literate" (2004, p. 27). Besides the general notion that literacy is simply the ability to read and write on an acceptable level (however that level is defined), literacy can now be seen, from this imaginative perspective, as a set of tools involving the imagination.

But how are we to define the imagination? If we think about the discussions in chapters 2, 3 and 4, there is a great deal that can be brought to bear on this term and how it might pertain to education. I decided, as a means of simplifying the term in an operational manner, to adopt Egan's definition of imagination as "the ability to think of things as possible -- the source of flexibility and originality in human thinking. The literate imagination is enhanced by the array of discoveries and inventions made in cultural history" (2005, p. 27). Adopting these definitions, and combining them with more standard conceptions of literacy, gave me a starting point in my research.

The other aspect of this issue, of course, is how to evaluate imaginative education if it turned out to affect some other aspect of literacy that standardized testing did not address. For this reason, I decided to wait until the study was well under way to ask whether there were aspects of literacy being developed that typical standardized testing might not measure. In fact, that is exactly what turned out to be the case, and has become one of the most exciting parts of the research. From this perspective, the use of qualitative rather than a purely quantitative research design seems in retrospect to have been the best choice.

As the study progressed, then, my overall goal shifted somewhat from determining whether imaginative education could develop literacy based on the

standard definition, to asking whether it could actually extend that definition in ways that had not previously been considered. Of course, if the definition is broad enough, then it can cover any eventuality. If we think of literacy as being the facility that people demonstrate in using language in their encounters with the world, then the definition can be stretched to cover any instance of language use. If we ask the more focused question, however, of how people specifically use language in their encounters with text, a question more suited for determining our purposes and outcomes in a classroom, we then find that imaginative education seems to require a much more nuanced understanding of literacy, at least in some ways. I shall return to this question when I discuss the actual findings of the study.

The second broad question which I wished to address is whether students would demonstrate more engagement with the curriculum if the techniques of imaginative education were being used. This raised another problem, of course, which is how such engagement could be measured: is this the same thing as motivation, or something different? It would seem to follow that if students were more engaged, they might also develop their skills more fully. These two issues, then, have been tied together from the beginning of the study.

Another purpose which developed as the study continued had to do with the manner in which the use of imaginative education could be made to fit with other classroom practices. In fact, as time went on, this became a central focus, for a number of reasons. Part of the issue had to do with the problem of fulfilling provincial and district mandates about covering curriculum. The other part of this issue has to do with how well imaginative education can be blended with other curricular objectives and teaching methods.

As an initial part of the study, I had interviewed district staff, as well as a number of teachers, to determine exactly what approach was being taken towards literacy district wide. The results, although not surprising, were not encouraging.

Both district staff and teachers took a cognitive skills based approach, but had not considered to any great depth issues of engagement, except to agree that it was a problem that all teachers faced. The problem of comprehension was a central focus, and there was certainly an understanding of the need to scaffold student learning. The use of an imaginative approach which could both engage students more deeply and focus on some specific cognitive tools which could mediate learning had not been addressed. Nor was there any indication that the teachers had considered any developmental model other than the standard one based on Piaget's work. The district literacy helping teachers provided support for teachers in the elementary schools throughout the district, and provided help in the use of provincially mandated and authorized texts. They also encouraged the use of texts beyond the basal readers, and offered suggestions about methodology that went beyond the typical IRE (Initiate, Respond, Evaluate) technique. There was no overall theoretical perspective in place, however.

If this study has as one of its aims the changing of current practices, then, it might be well to consider the manner in which the connection between students and the curriculum is conceptualized in all areas, not just in the teaching of literacy. If curriculum can be made more meaningful to students, and have deeper emotional resonances with them, then this may be sufficient to change a great deal of what happens in schools, and perhaps to ease the malaise with learning that I described in the introduction. This answers, too, I think, the question of why I wished to conduct this study. Current classroom practice, focusing only on cognitivist approaches, is achieving everything it is likely to be capable of. Adding more "skills" by itself, without a more fully-developed theoretical framework, or demanding that students work harder, will not improve education to any significant degree, in my view.

The other part of this question has to do with making imaginative education fit with other classroom practices. When the theory is discussed qua theory, it is not necessarily contextualized in terms of how classrooms operate on a day to day basis. One of the greatest barriers which I encountered was not the actual curriculum itself, but what students in grade six are and are not able to do in order for the teacher to employ some of the techniques of imaginative education. This goes back to the question of mediation: what must already be in place in order to allow students to take full advantage of their imaginative capacities? How can teachers best cross that gap to engage students at the right place in their zones of proximal development? I shall examine this issue in a more specific manner in chapters six and seven.

Maxwell also raises issues about the various sources which inform the application of theory to the practice of teaching under the heading of “conceptual context”. He points to previous experience, theory, and literature as sources of understanding of the phenomena being studied. I have attempted to cover this issue already in Part One, and so little needs to be added here, except to say that the pilot study itself became a very valuable source of insight to help guide the construction of the second study.

### **5.5: Research Questions**

The pilot study addressed a number of questions around literacy and student engagement, such as “Do the techniques of imaginative education affect students’ overall level of literacy as measured by standardized tests?”; “Do the techniques of imaginative education help First Nations students achieve levels of literacy more like those of “mainstream” students?” ; and “Does student

engagement with the curriculum increase as a consequence of the use of these techniques?”

As is typical of qualitative research, however, more questions arose as a consequence of my experiences with the students such as “What entry knowledge, skills and behaviours should students have to be able to benefit fully from the techniques of imaginative education?” ; “What kinds of stimulus does the imagination require to be able to function most effectively within the constraints of the typical classroom and the curriculum as mandated by the province?”; “How can students help each other to scaffold their use of the imagination?”; “Do the techniques of imaginative education lead to the development of more complex forms of narrative?” ; and perhaps most importantly, “How do classroom teachers have to change their approach to teaching and their understanding of curriculum objectives in order to be effective as imaginative teachers?”

In the second study, I decided to focus my attention on the issue of entry knowledge and behaviours, as this had turned out to be a substantial issue in the pilot. I also focused more on the question of how best to stimulate the imaginations of students using a wider variety of cognitive tools than I had employed in the pilot study, and how they could scaffold each other’s learning and use of the imagination. The last question concerning teachers I can only begin to address.

## **5.6: Methods**

### **5.6.1: Teaching Methodology**

I will leave the complete discussion of the teaching methods employed in this study for chapters six and seven, but in general, I attempted to blend typical classroom practices with more imaginative approaches which use imagery,

metaphor, abstract binary opposites, narrative, and various literacy tools such as list making and categorization. All of these methods were framed in the context of both a Mythic and Romantic framework for understanding, in which I continuously stressed human emotional connection to the material through stories and personal reflection on the part of the students. I shall leave a description of the two classes, and descriptions of the curriculum topics, to the chapters which focus on the specifics of the research.

### **5.6.2: Quantitative Instruments: Pilot Study<sup>4</sup>**

As a means of establishing some baseline data, in October, 2004, all students in the pilot study were given a CTBS (Canadian Test of Basic Skills)<sup>5</sup>, which examines vocabulary and reading comprehension skills, and were administered posttests at the end of the study in June 2005. They were given two tests of writing proficiency, based upon Provincial standards, at the beginning and at the end of the study. They were also administered a District Assessment of Reading Test, both pre- and posttest versions.

As the study progressed, one of the most important aspects of literacy to emerge was the students' use of narrative to integrate their learning. I developed a rubric for examining central aspects of students' use of narrative. This rubric, based on a six-point scale, examined a number of different elements of narrative such as the students' capacity to use cause and effect, their ability to manipulate time to structure the sequence of events, the use of interior monologue, the use of metaphor and sensory language to describe setting, the integration of facts and

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<sup>4</sup> All of the rubrics described here can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>5</sup> The C.T.B.S. is commercially available from BUROS Institute, [www.unl.edu/buros](http://www.unl.edu/buros).

details from their reading, their capacity for ethical reflection, and the ability to create two or more characters to create a sense of opposition and tension.

One of the areas that was most difficult to measure has to do with the question of engagement. What is of interest here is students' affective response to tasks. According to Chapman, "several studies have highlighted the significant role that such factors can play in the learning process (e.g. Mathewson, 1994), laying particular emphasis on those associated with student engagement levels" (2003, p.1). Chapman has integrated several approaches to this question in an attempt to summarize key factors that might indicate higher levels of student engagement with tasks. In order to assess student engagement, I drew upon Chapman's work and created two rubrics which attempt to measure the engagement of an entire class while they are engaged in a task (process), as well as the engagement of individual students as they produce products. I had the regular classroom teacher use the survey on a number of occasions while I taught, and looked for patterns which emerged. I used the product rubric to assess the degree to which students were engaged in the writing of their diaries.

They were also given a final exam which asked them to assess the three most important events in the history of Canada, in order to check their understanding of content. All of these instruments gave me numerical data which I used to make some general observations about overall student development and engagement.

### **5.6.3: Qualitative Instruments: Pilot Study**

One of the most important instruments of both studies was the Journals which I kept during the process, and in which I recorded my thoughts, observations, conclusions, and questions as the units progressed. I found that my Journal entries

became longer and more complex as I tried to incorporate more and more elements of my growing understanding. In part, this reflected my own growth as a researcher as I began to notice more complex aspects of the students' -- and my own -- behaviour. These observations were then used to sharpen my focus of observation, and to help me decide which aspects of the students' learning I would focus on. My reflections on their narrative writing ability, for example, were a consequence of the students' reading of their work aloud to the class, and my reflections later on what I had heard, and what elements I would choose to emphasize in class discussions.

I also used surveys in order to measure student engagement. Students completed a survey at the end of both studies in order for me to obtain their impressions on the value of imaginative education. This information was then combined with the quantitative information obtained from the engagement rubrics to produce an overall understanding of how imaginative education had affected the students' interests and attitudes towards the curriculum.

#### **5.6.4: Quantitative Instruments: Follow Up Study**

For the second study I reduced the number of quantitative instruments used, and focused more on in-depth understanding of particular aspects of imaginative education. I employed the rubrics for examining both process and product for engagement, and used the narrative rubric again to assess the quality of writing. However, for this study I did not average the scores of the students, but focused instead on an in-depth analysis of individual student work by examining a number of their entries over time, looking for evidence of growth in various criteria used in the rubric. I surveyed the students at the end of the study, as I had done for the first study, to gain some understanding of how they had responded to the techniques

that I had been using, and analyzed the results. I also compared the scores on this survey to those obtained on the first study to get a sense of whether the results would hold up, or whether they had just been a fluke.

#### **5.6.5: Qualitative Instruments: Second Study**

I kept a Journal for this study as well, and once again it proved to be a source of ideas and understanding. For this study, however, I also decided to do a few in-depth studies of the students' Journals. I had the students complete a "final exam" in which they tried to summarize the "big ideas" of the unit in their own words. I assessed the students' development of a variety of IRP (Integrated Resource Packages produced by the Ministry of Education) outcomes during the unit as the students completed various assignments. The IRP provides prescribed learning outcomes for students at each grade level. I also asked the teacher to write a response in which she summarized her own ideas and feelings about the study over the entire year to gain a more personal sense of how the techniques of imaginative education had affected her views of classroom practice.

#### **5.6.6: Data Analysis**

For the quantitative data from the first study, I looked for increases in average marks, in grade levels for reading, or for improvements in the quality of the narratives written by individual students over time. The engagement rubric for process allowed me to examine how student interest varied between the typical classroom teaching methods and those employed in the imaginative education part of the curriculum.

For the qualitative instruments, I looked for convergence with the results from both studies: did the students respond differently from the pilot to the second study, based on the surveys completed by the end of the units? I also cross-checked my impressions of students learning and engagement with the written response of the regular classroom teacher.

### **5.6.7: Validity**

The greatest threat to validity for this study comes from the fact that while the pilot study was going on, the students were also engaged in some fairly typical classroom literacy practices in their language arts curriculum, which was not connected to the history unit that I was teaching them. I discuss this problem in chapter six in more detail, when I analyze the data from the pilot study. This is one reason why in the second study the language arts part of the curriculum was conducted in concert with the history section.

Another validity threat may be the Hawthorne effect -- a different teacher might be enough of a stimulus for some students to influence their view of the material. This is why in the second study, the classroom teacher was also involved in teaching some of the units.

As well, there is the question of whether these techniques might be more interesting than the usual classroom methods at first, but begin to pall if used on a more regular basis. Of course, this same concern could be raised about any new approach to teaching, so it hardly pertains to the use of imaginative education specifically. Further, if any methodology is likely to escape the trap of becoming stale with use, surely imaginative education by its very nature is less likely to be guilty of this fault. The real issue is whether it can be shown to be efficacious when

applied deliberately in a controlled situation. To begin to answer that question, I now turn to the studies themselves.

## Chapter Six: Pilot Study

### 6.1: Introduction

In this chapter, I plan to discuss the background, planning, implementation, and results of the pilot study at one of the LUCID project schools. This study was done between February and June, 2005, with a class of grade six students.<sup>6</sup> The initial intent of the study was to examine how the use of a few of the cognitive tools might be applied to the teaching of history to grade six students, as well as to see how the techniques of imaginative education could be used to develop literacy. I chose history for a variety of reasons. In discussing the implications of his ideas for the curriculum (1997) Egan has said about history that:

It would be easy, for example, to design a yearlong history program based on the story of the human struggle for freedom against oppression of various kinds . . . The aim is to tell a vital part of the human story that will help students make sense of the world and the society into which they are growing. I have already argued that such a curriculum, focused on the triumphs and defeats of men, women and communities in various places down the ages, could be of more educational value than the typical social studies focused on the role of the mailman and the structure of the local environment (1997, p. 209).

This notion that history could be a vehicle for addressing important human issues around freedom and oppression is one that I share, and even though my primary focus is on the question of literacy development, using history as the content seemed to be a natural fit, given that I was also interested in narrative as a vehicle for both teaching and learning.

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<sup>6</sup> A revised version of this chapter was published as part of the conference proceedings at the 2005 One Vision, Many Voices Conference held in Edmonton.

I began the study by investigating the literacy practices that were typical of many elementary school classrooms in the province, as well as those that were current in the Chilliwack School District. To gain some perspective on how literacy is conceived by the classroom teachers involved in LUCID, I had the teachers complete a survey in order to determine whether the techniques of imaginative education that I was considering using would already be typical practice, or whether they could be safely characterized as something different enough to be worth investigating. I was also interested in examining how the district saw literacy, and how the techniques of imaginative education were seen as fitting into that notion.

I surveyed teachers on their ideas and attitudes towards literacy at the Imaginative Education Conference held in Vancouver in July, 2004. I was interested in the question of where teachers were starting from in their journey towards making their classrooms more imaginatively engaging for students. The responses were drawn from 27 teachers from the three school districts involved in the project. This sample is of course by no means representative of teachers as a whole. In fact, one could argue that these teachers, because they are self-selected for the project, already represent a group divergent from most mainstream teachers. The answers to these questions, however, helped me to understand how some teachers' perceptions of literacy, and their role in the classroom, help to create the context for seeing literacy in a particular kind of way, a way often subtly influenced by the institutional framework of curriculum guides, district mandates, and typical assessment practices .

The first question which I asked was "*At the age levels that you normally teach, what does a 'fluently literate' child look like? What attitudes, actions, or abilities tell you that the child has 'gotten it' - that literacy is no longer a problem but a resource for him/her?*" The responses show that the teachers have a great deal

of insight into fairly sophisticated notions of literacy. They were able to see beyond a merely skills-based approach to decoding information, and to appreciate the fact that literacy involves more complex attitudes towards learning as well. It was important for these teachers that students can not only understand but also interpret what they read. Students were required to be able to explain their ideas to others, both verbally and in writing. The capacity of students to take their ideas and apply them to new situations, and to develop their own ideas, was important for some teachers, as was the ability to think metacognitively about the processes in which they engaged. Students were thought to need to be able to retrieve information, and to connect ideas to previous knowledge.

Beyond the skills level, teachers recognized the importance of students becoming emotionally engaged with what they read, including seeing humour and desiring to communicate their ideas. The desire to read for its own sake also showed up in several responses, including the notion that reading ought to be engaged in for pleasure. Interestingly, the notion of competence in writing was only marginally addressed. Most teachers seemed to focus on the idea that literacy was a question of the ability to read and understand, while the idea that students should have a range of skills in terms of composing their own meaning was not mentioned often. Of course it is in the process of composition that imagination may be thought of as having its greatest scope for production and engagement.

Now aside from this lack of focus on the skills of writing, there is clearly very little to complain about in this list. If teachers were able to graduate students who demonstrated these abilities at a proficient level, most of us would be well pleased. There are at least two points to make here, however. The first is that this list shows the influence of cognitive approaches to education which have dominated the discourse around literacy over the past 40 years. Talk of metacognition, of connecting ideas to previous knowledge, of understanding and interpreting, shows

the growth in our understanding of literacy from the simplistic behaviouristic model which held sway during the 50s and 60s. Students are no longer expected to be able to read set texts and respond to fill-in-the-blank questions testing for literal interpretation and rote memorization. The second point is that there is a clear appreciation of the importance of emotional engagement with text. The idea that students would actually enjoy reading, and desire to convey their understanding to others, is clearly evident in the teachers' responses.

Less evident, however, is a sense that the students ought to engage their reading in an imaginative manner, transforming and creating meaning for themselves in the process. A few teachers did mention the notion that students ought to develop their own conclusions, but this insight seemed to be restricted to situations involving logical deduction rather than creative engagement. What seems missing from this list is a fully developed sense that reading and writing are part of a web of activities that lead to a deeper engagement of students in a sociocultural context of meaning. Further, even though these teachers were self-selected to train in techniques that will change their classrooms to make them more imaginative, the role of the imagination in literacy was never addressed directly as an issue.

The next question that I asked of teachers was: "*Briefly describe the 'literacy profile' of a typical class that you teach - the range of reading and writing that children do, and the role of oral and written language in their lives*". Responses to this question were diverse, and reflect the difficulties that teachers face in trying to manage an environment in which students have a wide variety of needs, interests, and abilities. The "one definition of literacy approach to teaching" seems to be most prevalent here, because the question itself raises the problem of diversity in terms of ability levels. Ability levels in classes range from students who are simply illiterate in the commonly accepted sense, to students who are

performing several grade levels beyond the average. One teacher commented: "Within our district readers the students would range from emergent to grade 10+ ability." (grade 5/6 teacher). The irrelevance of the B.C. Performance Standards, which are meant to act as guidelines for teachers, became apparent. One teacher commented: "I do not mean to say that I think that the Performance Standards are great. I don't think a strict adherence to them benefits anyone." Teachers understand that they are meant to use the guidelines to judge the progress of students, but applying the Standards in real classroom situations is clearly problematic. The diversity of the student population makes applying one standard a frustrating and often counterproductive exercise.

For some teachers of First Nations students, one of the major points of difficulty was the fact that written assignments were not valued in their community, although those who do value written assignments seem to prefer short story writing, giving some credence to the idea that an imaginative approach works well with First Nations children. The issue of the connection between orality and literacy was addressed only in the context of reading aloud. Students were expected to show a proper range of behaviours in this activity, with students being willing to sit quietly while other students read, or to being able to read without hesitating or stumbling over words themselves. One teacher even defined fluency as reading "according to the BC Performance Standards" while admitting that the Performance Standards themselves are not a good measurement of literacy.

One of the most poignant comments came from a teacher who wrote that "I'm continually surprised at how their young lives are influenced by the experiences of their families. Those who do spend time on the land, at the beach, in the villages, or in the family gathering activities come with those stories. They can also come with the stories from TV, videos and DVD's. I sometimes realize if I don't watch or know those stories I can't distinguish what's coming from kids'

imaginations or heavily paid TV show writers.” Clearly the barriers to creating an imaginative classroom are not merely the ones created by curriculum demands or district guidelines, but are also part of the culture in which our students live.

Perhaps what emerges most clearly from teachers’ answers to these questions, however, is that there is almost no talk of how language is being used by students in any place except school, where its role is confined, for the most part, to lessons in language arts. A few teachers indicated that they tried to teach both reading and writing across the curriculum, but for most it remains an activity that is tied to individual lessons emphasizing particular, discrete skills. Almost never mentioned is the notion of using the skills of orality as a beginning point for reading and writing. Literacy is almost always conceived of as an activity that is limited to a narrow range of the curriculum rather than being seen as something that operates to draw together different strands of knowledge from every discipline. The question of how specific skills of decoding and meaning-making can be integrated into a broader conception of what it means to be a fully literate person is never explored.

On the district level, I examined the conception of literacy held by the literacy team in Chilliwack. The literacy team is a group of two teachers and an administrator who have been seconded from the schools on a part-time basis to deal with literacy district-wide. These questions dealt with the district’s overall approach to teacher training, addressing the needs of students not performing according to performance standards, and theoretical approaches to literacy. The district’s responses in many ways simply echoed the kinds of presumptions that were evident in the classroom teachers’ approach to literacy. Their definition of literacy, for example, mirrors the cognitivist approach, emphasizing the development of skill sets, as evidenced by such abilities as accessing information, making connections, communicating ideas and information, and solving problems. The impact of the critical thinking movement is apparent here as well in terms of

the integration of thinking skills in the definition of literacy itself. The Performance Standards established by the province were cited as the benchmark against which student progress is measured. The district has in place a "literacy framework" document which sets out the steps to be taken to remediate the "at risk" students who fail to achieve at a level consistent with the literacy standards. Literacy is seen to be the main responsibility of the Language Arts teachers, although there is a recognition that literacy should be emphasized across the curriculum, and over the past few years, there has been a move to implement reading strategies in content areas. The importance of oral language development is recognized, but its application seems to be restricted to phonemic awareness and to vocabulary development. Issues pertaining to the development of literacy using the skills of oral language are not specifically addressed. The district also has in place a number of literacy initiatives, none of which, however, takes into account an imaginative approach to literacy and learning. There is no overall theoretical framework guiding literacy practices, but rather an amalgam of approaches drawing from several perspectives.

From these surveys I drew the conclusion that although there were a number of interesting and valuable programs in place for the development of literacy, there was almost no awareness of the importance and potential value of approaching literacy -- and perhaps others aspects of the curriculum as well -- from an imaginative perspective. There seems to be plenty of potential, then, for using the techniques of imaginative education in the classroom as a means of improving literacy and engagement among students, a conclusion also supported by my own experience as a classroom teacher at the senior secondary level.

## 6.2: Classroom Context

In the pilot study, I worked in a grade 6 classroom for five months. The students were a mixture of First Nations and others from diverse backgrounds. Most had been born in British Columbia, while a few were recent immigrants. Almost all spoke English at home as a first language. There were no students in the class who needed ESL help. There were 25 students in total, of whom eight were First Nations. Of those eight, two were diagnosed as developmentally delayed, one severely. There was a part-time Learning Assistance teacher working with the most developmentally delayed child. As a group, the class was considered very typical by the regular classroom teacher, with students ranging in ability from below grade level to well above. Their scores on the C.T.B.S. (Canadian Test of Basic Skills) were typical, with one student operating on a grade two level, one on a grade three level, and several at between grades four and five. Most of the students were close to, or at the appropriate literacy level for grade six, while two were operating a year above grade level, and one was two years above, based on the initial C.T.B.S. scores. This test was given early in the year as a diagnostic, and to serve as a benchmark for the pilot study.

The regular classroom teacher has been teaching for over ten years, and has a very imaginative way of approaching curriculum. For this study, she took on the role of observer and assistant. She made suggestions about how the unit might best work with her students, and helped plan a number of activities. She collaborated with me on assessment strategies, and made observations of my teaching as the unit progressed. I relied heavily on our collaborative conversations in order to plan my lessons in a way that would work for grade 6 students, as my experience with them was limited. The teacher proved to be an invaluable

resource person for suggesting how to overcome limitations in student understanding, and for pacing lessons at the right level and tempo for this class.

### **6.3: Content of the Unit**

For the pilot study, I decided to employ a wide range of assessment instruments, but to limit the cognitive tools to a few that I thought might be most relevant to the content of the unit, such as metaphor, association with heroes, wonder and mystery, imagery, revolt and idealism, and narrative. I did this in order to see how a focus on a few tools might enhance learning and engagement, and perhaps be easier to measure using the instruments I had available.

The main focus of student learning in terms of content was the history of Canada, which was taught as a story in which I emphasized Egan's notions of identification with heroes and wonder and mystery in order to increase the students' emotional engagement, humanizing the context whenever possible. One of the points that Egan makes is that in planning a unit, teachers must have a sense of the human meaning behind the content -- what makes this particular thing worth knowing? I decided that students needed to know the history of Canada because of the connection that it would have to understanding their own lives, particularly for the Aboriginal students. I explained this rationale to the students at the beginning of the unit, and brought it back to their attention at any relevant opportunity.

The dominant metaphor for the unit was a canoe journey down the river of time beginning with the arrival of the First Nations People some 12,000 years ago. As we voyaged down the river, we beached our canoes and made journeys into the "information forest" trying to discover new pathways and new sites of interest. The first landing was at the time when the First Peoples came to North America.

We learned about their mythology, and the students began by writing their own myths, and making their own stories. The lens through which we began the unit was focused particularly on Aboriginal ways of knowing, and all of the students took turns in the role of the “Storyteller,” making and telling their own myths about the world. Aboriginal content was introduced through stories, legends, and myths drawn from several sources, including local mythology. Throughout the unit, we integrated material from the First Nations people as often as possible, emphasizing their role in the history of Canada.

Students worked with typical classroom materials, such as standard historical information drawn from the net, and made timelines showing the relative timeframe of important events. They also produced works of art, such as pictures, to represent their understanding. Much of the content was taught using a series of videotapes called “Canada, a People’s History”. This material is presented in a documentary fashion, using actors portraying real figures from Canadian history. One of the main reasons why I chose this particular set of videos was that often the narrator would describe important events in the life histories of the central characters as a means of humanizing the story of Canada’s history. This allowed me to present history not merely as a set of facts and events, but as a set of incidents that took place in the lives of real people who had feelings, hopes and fears about the process. I would often stop the tape, and talk to the students about their own responses to what they were seeing, asking how they would feel if they had been involved in these events themselves. I told stories about particular people and the struggles they had faced as they journeyed to North America at different times.

The students’ responses took the form of diary entries in which we encouraged them to take on the roles of various historical figures. During the course of the unit, I required more and more complex and nuanced responses

from the students in order to develop not only their writing skills, but their degree of involvement with the story of Canada itself. As the unit progressed, students decided to develop their ideas into a play and, using their diaries as source material, wrote and directed the play, performed before the entire school, in which they reenacted the story of Canada's history.

I was also interested in finding a way of integrating knowledge of the First Nations people into the unit as a means of making the content more applicable to the backgrounds of a number of our students. An important component of the unit was a series of lessons on the myths and legends of the Aboriginal people. We watched a DVD production showing the legend of Raven, and how he brought the sun to the First Peoples. Students then researched myths and legends on the net, and taught other students what these myths had to say. Then they wrote a diary entry in which they made up their own myth, and related it to the class as a native storyteller might have done. We discussed the art of the storyteller, and the role that stories played in the lives of the Aboriginal people.

#### **6.4: Imaginative Education in Process: Using Cognitive Tools**

Overall, the manner in which the curriculum was presented to the students was driven by their interest in various aspects of Canadian history, and when it is thus motivated, this seems to allow students' natural curiosity to come to the fore. When I initially planned the unit, I used a traditional approach based on a set of learning outcomes and a listing of key terms and assessment vehicles. As the unit began, however, I realized that the traditional methodology would probably lead to a traditional outcome, so I began to take a more intuitive approach to the lessons, letting them evolve based on student interest and response. I began to adopt a more open-ended approach to outcomes, particularly content objectives, so that

information could be presented to students when it was appropriate and relevant to their growing interests.

The classroom teacher and I began by asking the students to tell us everything that they knew about Canadian history, and what they would like to know, using a KWL chart (what do you Know already about the topic, what do you Want to know, and what did you Learn at the end?). At the end of each section of the unit, we would see if we had answered all of their questions, and what else had been covered in the process. On many occasions, students would raise questions in class for which I had no immediate answer, and so the class would be sent off to search the internet and encyclopedias. This in turn might raise a new question -- on two occasions, students challenged what they had read in the encyclopedia by pointing to some other information that they had uncovered, leading to a discussion of the reliability of information from various sources, and the need for a skeptical approach to the "facts" presented by different people.

To employ the cognitive tools, I began by teaching the students how to use metaphor and simile as part of the development of descriptive writing. I presented them with a set of pictures cut from a calendar, and asked them to describe their picture using only similes and metaphors. Most of the students proved to be quite adept at this, and I was often surprised by their creativity. I also tried to employ metaphor in our class discussions as a means of helping them understand certain concepts.

I had the students find images on the net that illustrated their interests from watching the videotapes, and from our class discussions. I used overhead transparencies to show the students pictures that I had taken from various sources, and used them as the basis for discussions. I often asked them to close their eyes and to imagine a scene as I described it, then to write down what they had seen in their minds. I found imagery to be a powerful stimulus to their imaginations, and

often had them compare the images that they had imagined with those created by other students.

I used abstract binary opposites to help them frame their responses to certain issues that arose as the unit progressed. For example, we discussed whether it was right for the whites to impose their ideas of civilization on the Native people. Students made lists contrasting the good and bad aspects of white civilization, then wrote a paragraph defending a point of view, considering both sides of the issue. This led to a very powerful class debate on the topic in which students had to defend one point of view or the other. This also helped support the idealism and revolt tool, as the students expressed ideas that led to a discussion of what the best solution would be to the Native land claims issue, and why the Native people feel the way they do about land claims.

The most powerful tool that I employed, however, and the one that I used as the centerpiece of my assessment, was the diary entries in which students had to assume the roles of various historical figures. In these diary entries I had them bring together the other cognitive tools to act as support for their development of ideas. These historical figures were rarely famous people, but most often ordinary people who happened to be witnesses to history. The events were recast from the perspective of the people who lived then, both famous and mundane alike, Aboriginal and European. They wrote a diary in which they told how it would be to have lived the events "from the inside out," as it were, as opposed to the disengaged perspective of a disembodied intelligence standing outside of historical time. The students have been Aboriginal people coming to North America 12,000 years ago; Vikings landing in Newfoundland in 843 AD, or the Aboriginal people who first encountered them; stowaways on Cabot's ship; sailors with Martin Frobisher, or Inuit people meeting Frobisher's men; early colonists in Champlain's Quebec; Indigenous people encountering the first missionaries;

Aboriginal people dying from smallpox; fur traders in New France, or Aboriginal people guiding them through the forests; Acadians being driven from their homes by the English; soldiers fighting alongside Montcalm; and news reporters reporting the aftermath of the war in Quebec. Facts and details concerning the characters' lives and times were woven into the narrative, so that they became more meaningful by being associated with someone with whom the student could identify.

Now this notion of writing a Journal or a diary is one that is often employed by many social studies teachers. An important point to make here is that the techniques of imaginative education do not have to be entirely different from current classroom practice. My focus here was not just on the "facts" of history, but on how students "took up" those facts in their consciousness by employing various cognitive tools. It is the deliberate focusing on the imagination that makes this kind of education different from regular classroom practice, even when the products of teaching look superficially the same. Often teachers develop techniques that work well, and incorporate them into their planning, without really understanding why those techniques have been so successful. If imaginative education gives a road map to developing such techniques, however, then it will be an incredibly useful means of planning and delivering curriculum to students in a way that will possibly almost always be successful.

### **6.5: Integrating Curricula**

Another aspect of this open-ended approach is the possibility of incorporating curricula from other areas when it becomes useful. Rather than scheduling science and mathematics content in decontextualized units called "science", or "math," the material was tied naturally to some issue that arose as we

explored together. When we discussed the early explorers, the issue of scurvy came up, and the students wanted to know how the disease was caused, and how it was cured. We discussed disease in general, and how recent epidemics, such as SARS, have spread through modern means of transport. When we discussed the first explorers, I explained how primitive the navigational techniques of the time were, and how courageous these explorers were in setting out across the ocean not knowing where they would end up. We made quadrants, and using compasses, located the latitude of Newfoundland by sighting the Pole star (a cutout of which I had pasted on the ceiling of the room). Students wanted to know why the North Pole is magnetic, and what that had to do with the northern lights. I explained magnetism, and how stars eject high -energy particles towards the earth during high sunspot activity. What had begun as a demonstration of navigation then expanded to fill over an hour of questions, all linked to a few central concepts in science.

Art has also been an important component of this method of teaching as a means of creating visual metaphors of meaning. The regular classroom teacher had already taught the students a number of techniques upon which they were able to draw, and they created a visual montage of the time periods which we were studying by choosing metaphoric representations that stood for the most important ideas. They drew pictures which represented their feelings and opinions about the events, and created a timeline which incorporated their work in a communal creation of meaning and engagement. For the time period of the first people to cross the Bering land bridge, for example, they chose a mastodon with a flash of lightning behind it to represent power, fear, and the mystery and wonder of the unusual. For the Vikings, they chose a horned helmet, a cloudy sky, with the prow of a Viking ship behind, to represent travel, battle, adventure, and heroism in the face of danger. In fact, one of the most important components of developing

meaning throughout the unit was the transformation of understanding from one medium to another, from internet text to diary, from video narrative to metaphor montage, from class discussion to play. This transformation often involved the use of visual metaphors which brought together elements of meaning in a form that seemed to summarize their overall understanding.

We also integrated language arts by having the students take notes from various readings, and from the video series which was an adjunct to the unit. Then the students took the information and transformed it by applying their imaginations to produce their own narratives, as well as works of art. The students employed techniques which drew together the strands of their understanding to create a tapestry of meaning which was both culturally based as well as intensely personal.

### **6.6: Developing Narrative Engagement**

Of central importance was the development of narrative writing ability that was explicitly targeted by the use of imaginative techniques. Although short-story writing is a common feature of most elementary school classrooms, it is often used merely as a means of checking students' mechanics, sentence structure, and other basic elements of composition. Rubrics which are employed to mark student narrative writing, for example, usually stress aspects such as voice, mechanics, organization and sentence fluency. It is primarily a means for students to demonstrate their literacy skills rather than to develop the tools of the imagination itself. Rarely is it used as a vehicle for the exploration of content-area understanding.

In contrast, I was interested in examining the degree to which the students were able to personalize their connection to historical time through the use of first-person narration and the extent of their imaginative engagement with the facts

of the history of Canada as they were learning it, as well as their subjective response to those facts. The process I used was to have them watch a video on the time period, and to answer a set of questions based on the facts presented. Then they went to the net and researched more material, based on their interests. They discussed the time period as a class, and we reflected on how the people must have felt, and what they were thinking at the time. We raised issues of ethical concern, such as the treatment of the Aboriginal people by various groups of explorers and settlers. Before beginning the writing process, I had the students close their eyes while I walked them through a day in the life of a character of the time. Then they were given half an hour to write. When they were done, they shared their stories by reading them to the class. What I hoped to see was development of their capacity to access the "feel" of an historical period and to communicate that feeling in their writing.

In order to measure this development, I created a rubric that specifically targeted some aspects of imaginative education, such as the use of similes and imagery in description, their capacity to use binary opposites to structure their work, their identification with heroic qualities, their sense of mystery and wonder, and their ability to make hypotheses and predictions. A number of standard elements of narrative were included in the rubric, such as the use of dialogue and character development. I examined the use of interior monologue as a means of assessing how students were internalizing the facts as presented. Rather than adopting a purely externalized view of events, students began to see the events "from the inside out". The rubric also addressed a number of elements of narrative that are of interest in the growth towards more expository forms of writing, such as the use of cause and effect, rhetorical devices, and the inclusion of facts drawn from the students' historical studies. The rubric also examined the students' ability to engage issues of values and ethics. The rubric was designed on a six-point scale

to allow more opportunity to measure subtle growth. Overall what I was interested in was the integration of the students' perceptions, feelings, thoughts and attitudes in the form of a narrative in which they tried to imagine what it must have been like to have lived in another time in another body.

Part of the success of this approach has to do with the story frame of the material, in which the "heroic" element plays a large role. For students of this age level, stories are made more engaging by finding that aspect of the material which can be cast in terms of someone or something that played an heroic role. In discussing the first people who came to North America, for example, I stressed how courageous they must have been to have come across the Bering strait not knowing what they would find on the other side. I discussed the animals that would have inhabited North America (leading to a discussion of the role of evolution in allowing animals to adapt to changing circumstances), and pointed out the limitations of the technology of the time in terms of hunting and defending themselves from these creatures. I also stressed, as a kind of binary opposite, the wonder and excitement that they must have felt on the one hand, as well as the fear they must have experienced on the other when they arrived in a new land. I tried to encourage students to associate with a heroic quality, and embody that quality in a person who became a character in their diary entry. This identification with heroic qualities as embodied in a particular individual helped students to identify with the human dimension of the facts that they were learning.

### **6.7: Response of First Nations Students**

All of our students, but perhaps most particularly the First Nations ones, came to a deeper understanding of the important role played by Aboriginal people in the history of Canada, and their perspectives serve to offer an interesting

counterbalance to the narrative of Canada as it is usually told. We utilized the myths and legends of the Indigenous peoples in order to help frame that history, and to demonstrate that there are many perspectives from which history can be recreated and interpreted. Here I was attempting to deconstruct the categories in which the history of Canada is often told, and to allow students to reintegrate the facts in a different form. As the unit progressed, students took turns reading their diary entries to the class, and discussing the various aspects of narrative voice they were employing. Beyond that, arguably, we also began to see more engagement in their responses, an engagement that comes not only from having their own story as First Nations people validated, but also from the use of forms of discourse more suited to their own cultural values.

Most of the First Nations students showed great growth throughout the process. Before we began using the techniques of imaginative education, several of them were already demonstrating signs of being "at risk" for dropping out within a few years: low attendance, lack of focus in the class, failure to do assignments, lower reading levels, and refusal to complete written work were typical behaviours. However, as the unit of Canadian history progressed, these students became more and more engaged, to the point where some of them began to take on roles as leaders in the class. One young girl who is very bright, but who has learned many techniques for avoiding work, began doing her writing assignments, and even volunteered to read some of her work on videotape. She also took on the role as leader for her section of the play. One of the developmentally delayed boys wrote more for his diary than he had in the previous five months of school, and was willing to share his entries. Other students showed me their work proudly, and brought items from home that are part of their cultural heritage. These students clearly moved in the direction that we would want them to, towards a fuller engagement with classroom activities.

Now all of these methods of integrating curriculum using the techniques of imaginative education have led to what appears to be a more rich, more engaging experience for the students, in spite of the limitations of working within the constraints of time and curriculum demands. If we were to ask how an imaginative classroom "looks" in comparison to one which operates under the constraints of provincial curriculum guidelines, district mandates, and standard conceptions of literacy, the first thing that we might notice is a different level of engagement by the students. One of the First Nations students, who also happens to be one who has been labeled "developmentally delayed", was writing in his diary near the middle of the study. He had chosen to take the role of a fur trader, and was writing a letter home to his mother, describing his adventures. In it he had written a vivid description of the first winter spent in New France as one of Champlain's men, and the hardship that he had endured. His narrative blended in facts about that first year in the new world, with striking similes which led to emotional and critical engagement with the subject. He looked up at me when I passed by his desk, and said in a low voice, "Mr. McKellar, this is fun." I looked down at his work, and although it was replete with spelling and grammatical errors, he had somehow managed to capture the look and feel of the life of a fur trader. He had poured his understanding, and more importantly, his feelings, into his work. For this young man at least, imaginative education has opened a door which was previously closed to him. As I told the class at the end of that lesson that they had had an experience with the history of Canada that would stay with them for the rest of their lives.

### 6.8: Some Difficulties

At the same time, there are some considerations which must be taken into account in using this approach to curriculum. I have discovered that the most imaginative teaching plan can be sidetracked by some basic limitations that students have. It is necessary to feed the imaginations of students in order for them to take full advantage of imaginative possibilities. Just telling students to “use their imaginations” does not really give them any material to use in their imagining. Nor is the engagement of the imagination merely an end in itself, but a means of helping the students to develop their toolkit of literacy through the engagement in imaginative practices. In particular, there appear to be a number of critical thinking abilities required for students to be able to use their imaginative capacities, and to develop their toolkit, properly.

For example, in teaching students about the past, I wanted them to gain a sense of the immense time that had passed while the First Nations people had lived in North America before the European explorers arrived. To do this I gave them a roll of adding machine tape, a metre stick and some black felt pens. Working in groups of four, they were to take all of the dates we had covered during the unit so far, and to place them on the tape in the appropriate place. Then they were to write down all the information that they had about that time on another piece of paper, and attach it to the timeline. Where possible, they would download images from the internet, and place them along the timeline to represent what was happening at that period of history, to give an overall sense of transition from one time to another.

Now as a strategy, this seems fairly straightforward. The first hurdle that had to be overcome, however, was the lack of organization that seems to plague most grade sixes. Notes were stuffed into desks almost at random, and in no

particular order (in spite of the instruction to place them into a journal for later use). Choosing dates from the many we had discussed was difficult. For grade six students, all of the dates were on the same level of importance. The critical thinking skill of evaluation is one that adults take for granted; for young children, it is a skill that has to be learned through application in a number of contexts. Once a number of dates had been chosen, it should have been a fairly easy task to measure and mark the tape to figure out where to put the dates. But the next hurdle was the fact that students often don't understand the concept of CE and BCE. The notion that time would go backwards from 0 into prehistory and forward from 0 to the present day left many of them bewildered. Having established that idea, we moved on to actually putting dates on the timeline. But calculating where 1639, for example, would fit between 1,000 and 2,000 CE proved to be another challenge, one that only required some application of basic math, but in the context of a physical piece of paper stretched down an entire hallway of the school, proved to be quite problematic. Multiply that by six times for the different groups, and the logistics of dealing with a project like this begin to become apparent.

And yet, the students remained engaged for the entire period of time. One of the most telling moments came when one of the Aboriginal boys, who is incredibly shy, came up to me near the end of the process with a thick wad of material. He had independently decided that the long gap between the arrival of the First Peoples and the coming of the Europeans had to be filled with something, and so he went to the internet and downloaded as many dates from prehistory as he could. As the session ended, we were busily plotting where the Romans would be located, when the Egyptians built the pyramids, and what kinds of dates we might find that would fit into the other long spaces. More importantly, for the first time this child had a sense of the length of time that his own ancestors had lived and died in the new world, how much history of their own that had passed, and how

deeply rooted they were in North America. The use of the visual representation of time had given his imagination some traction to deal with the meaning of a 12,000 year expanse of time in a way not possible by words alone.

### **6.9: Making Connections: Teachers and Students**

As the unit progressed, I also came to realize the pivotal role played by my relationship to the students in allowing them to engage with the curriculum. Although it is always the case that teachers need to be sensitive to the needs and motivations of their students, imaginative education seems to require an extra effort to make connections to students that allows them to open up to other possibilities. Until I had gained their trust, I found that they were somewhat cautious about sharing their ideas, or becoming fully involved with using their imaginations. At the same time, using imaginative educational techniques made great demands on me as a teacher, as I found that I could not simply rely upon presenting curriculum to the students in a traditional manner, but had to engage my own intuition at its highest level in order to make the material come alive for the kids in the classroom. Jagla (1994) talks about creating this kind of atmosphere in the class by writing about a high school teacher who is

... able to facilitate this connection making through the thorough understanding he has of his students and his empathy with high school students by remembering what it was like to be in high school, himself. He is a sympathetic, approachable and accessible person who has established a warm, open environment in his classes. Therefore, his students feel comfortable enough to explore their own imaginative connections to topics (p. 130).

Learning how to connect to the lives of our students, remembering what it was like to have been in their shoes, is itself an act of the imagination, one that may be essential for any teacher hoping to allow his or her students' imaginations to flourish in the classroom. Without that kind of connection, all of the theory and methodology in the world will probably not suffice to unlock the inner world of childhood imagination.

A large focus of this approach to education, then, is to use the teacher's authority in the classroom in a manner that facilitates, rather than impedes, the creation of what might be called a holistic learning community which draws upon the resources of the teacher as facilitator, rather than as controller, in the emerging processes which engage students in learning about any topic. When Egan calls for a kind of literacy that leads to a fuller engagement of the imagination as a source of "flexibility and originality in human thinking" (2004, p. 27), this seems to require that teachers reconsider their role in the classroom as "sage on the stage" and instead consider how they might act to open doors otherwise closed to students. This will require helping students to learn how to take responsibility for their own learning, to take the initiative, and to think for themselves. The implications for PDP programs would themselves be sufficient for a complete follow up study.

### **6.10: Preliminary Findings**

If we turn to the research questions posed at the beginning of the Methodology section, we see that there were three that began the study, and another three that emerged as being of importance as the study progressed. The first had to do with the question of whether imaginative education could improve students' overall level of literacy, as measured by standardized tests. Several specific measures were used to assess the students' achievement in this area,

each of which measures the students' performance against different groups. The D.A.R.T. (District Assessment of Reading Test), was administered in January and in May. The Scholastic Write, which uses the B.C. Performance Standards, was marked by the classroom teacher. The C.T.B.S. (Canadian Test of Basic Skills) is norm referenced for students throughout Canada, and has been used for over 40 years to provide benchmark data. Each of these assessment vehicles provides both pre- and post - test instruments so that comparisons with individual students and classes can be made longitudinally.

Overall the D.A.R.T. results, based on a four-point scale, did not show any significant gains in reading ability. According to this test, none of the students was exceeding grade expectations either before or after the study. Almost all of the students were either at or near expectations both before and after, with only 4 of the 25 who were significantly below. None of the Aboriginal students either met or exceeded expectations in either pre - or posttests. But this test may lack the sensitivity needed to measure any change over a short period of time. The Scholastic Write uses the same kind of four-point scale as the D.A.R.T. Although there were indications of growth here, again the scale is not sensitive enough to be very helpful. Quite a few of the students managed to move from the "below-grade" level to the "at grade level" range, but this could mean either a slight improvement that only indicates minimal growth for a student near the cutoff, or substantial improvement for a student well below grade level. .

The C.T.B.S. seems to have shown more student improvement. The test measures both vocabulary and reading comprehension, and in both areas, the majority of the students have shown improvement. First Nations' students in particular seem to have made excellent strides, with some students improving by almost two grade levels in vocabulary. According to this test, reading comprehension seems to have shown the most dramatic increase of all,

particularly among the Aboriginal students, with an overall improvement of over two grades. Only two of the normal Aboriginal students are now not functioning at or above grade level, a dramatic improvement over the pretest level, when none of the Aboriginal students were at grade level for reading. This was accomplished in only 5 months of classroom instruction using the techniques of imaginative education, combined with the regular classroom language arts instruction. The teacher herself seemed rather surprised by the degree of growth evidenced by this test, and had not seen this type of change in previous years with other students using the same measures and regular classroom practices.

To supplement these standard measurements of overall literacy, I also employed a measurement that examined students' capacity to utilize the techniques of narrative writing. The narrative rubric was central to my investigation of the growth of the students' capacity to engage imaginatively with the details of history. Using this tool as a measuring device, I was able to examine the growth of the class as a whole, the development of individual students over time, and the development of particular criteria. The results in this area have been quite impressive, showing fairly consistent and wide-ranging growth in almost every area. Student entries increased in overall length, complexity and development of ideas. The average class mark on the first entry was only a 3.22 on the 6 point scale, with fewer than half of the students completing the task. But by the eighth entry, the average had risen fairly steadily to 4.52, an improvement of more than a scale point. More importantly, however, the number of students completing the task had risen to 21 of 25, the missing entries being the result of absenteeism. As students gained more confidence with the use of narrative responses, their interest and ability increased as well.

This increased level of engagement is also reflected in the product rubric for engagement, which shows a consistent improvement from the beginning of the

unit to the end. Student work increased in length, and began to demonstrate much more emotional engagement with the task. The observations made by the classroom teacher indicate that while students were engaged in group activities, or while they were involved in whole-class activities such as answering questions or a class discussion, their engagement levels were very high.

Furthermore, this result held for all students, with First Nations students also making some improvement. Even one of the disabled native boys made some dramatic growth, being able to write more extensively in his diary than he had ever written before. The average scores for the Aboriginal students increased more slowly than those for the mainstream students at first, primarily because very few of them were willing to complete the first entries. Only 2 of the 8 Aboriginal students completed the first entry, receiving a score of 2.5. But by the time we had reached the eighth entry, 5 of the 8 completed their entries, receiving an average score of 4.3. Once the Aboriginal students decided to risk this activity, they began to show results fairly consistent with those shown by the rest of the class.

My subjective perspective, reflected in my journal entries, is that the students' capacity to write improved significantly over the five months, as did their ability to empathize with the feelings of the individuals of the time. What the final diary entries reveal is that students were now able to place their characters in a more chronologically complex frame, reflecting on time past as well as making hypotheses about the future. They were able to handle cause and effect relationships in a more nuanced manner, and to connect their feelings with their thoughts in a more developed way.

In order to develop some triangulation, I also surveyed the students at the end of the unit to determine their subjective responses to the use of imaginative education. Here the results demonstrated fairly strong student support for the use of imaginative techniques. On a 10 point scale in which 5 equaled the student's'

interest in regular forms of classroom learning, students ranked imaginative education at a level of 7.96. The Aboriginal students ranked imaginative education at 7.99, an almost identical score. Once again, the responses from the Aboriginal students were consistent with the rest of the class, with almost all of them choosing the diary entries as being their favorite technique for learning.

### **6.11: Summary and Conclusions**

One of the most valuable findings to come out of this study is the possibility of developing skills and understandings, using the techniques of imaginative education, that are rarely if ever developed using traditional classroom methodologies. In particular, the use of narrative responses to develop a sense of historical understanding seems to have benefits not just for the study of history, but for the development of deeper engagement in the writing process itself. Furthermore, by looking at the nature of narration through the lens of the imagination, I was able to expose different facets of narration's power to structure student experiences. Here students were able to demonstrate their ability to make observations, to draw conclusions from events, to predict outcomes, to make emotional connections, to make value judgments, and to structure dialogue. The narrative structure also allows for the beginnings of the kind of abilities which are required for more literate forms of writing, such as persuasive essays.

Another important aspect of this type of approach to education is the development of the cognitive tools themselves, as well as the actual content of the unit. By the end of this period of only five months, students seemed to have developed a greater capacity to use their imaginations to form images, to make hypotheses about possible states of affairs, to show empathetic understanding, and to consider various possible sides to any issue. A more fully integrated

educational program would then develop these abilities further by using them for further growth in other areas of the curriculum.

The results also indicate that students seemed to find the imaginative approach to education to be more engaging than the usual classroom practices to which they are often subjected. Whether this would be sustained if they were using imaginative techniques constantly would be something that would be clearer with more research. In looking at the data regarding the First Nations students, I can only conclude that they were benefiting at least as much as the more mainstream students. They have shown some dramatic improvement in several areas of language arts, making some clear gains from their previous positions. Vocabulary, reading comprehension and capacity to write extended narration have all shown improvement.

One of the most important points about the use of imaginative education is not only that it might allow classroom teachers to achieve the usual typical classroom objectives more readily, but that it might also allow them to reach objectives and outcomes that are rarely achieved in typical classrooms. We need to think more deeply about the kind of thing that we value in terms of what students are expected to do. Often we fall into the trap of assessing and evaluating on the basis of what we can measure most easily, confusing that with something worthwhile. It would be easy to ask students to name three explorers, or to give the date for the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, but it is difficult to see what makes this a useful piece of educational measurement except that it is an easy one to assess, unless our primary goal in education is to fill students' minds with inert facts. I see no necessary reason why those kinds of objectives can't be met along with more "imaginative" ones, however, using a combination of good literacy practices and the cognitive tools of imaginative education.

### 6.12: Questions for Further Research

Following the pilot study, and the observations I had made, I developed some questions for a further study, which I undertook the following semester. These questions are meant to be in addition to the ones I had previously asked during the first study, as I do not feel that the initial questions have been definitively answered by any means. These further questions, however, were meant to guide a more nuanced approach to the topic:

- what other cognitive tools can be utilized in teaching history?
- how can students work together more effectively to help each other develop their imaginative responses to curriculum?
- how can regular classroom practices and techniques be combined more effectively with an imaginative approach?
- can the beginning of Philosophic understanding be developed at this level?

These questions then formed the beginning point of the second study done at the same school, and to which I now turn.

## Chapter Seven: Follow Up Study

### 7.1: Introduction

In this chapter I will be discussing the results of the second research project, conducted between September, 2005 and January, 2006. This study was based in part on some of the questions which I had generated in the first study, and partly on some of the same questions that had driven the pilot study itself. As overriding questions, I was still interested in determining whether imaginative education could be an effective way of developing engagement and literacy among students. I was also still interested in whether imaginative education could prove to be effective for Aboriginal students as well as “mainstream” ones. But this time I was curious about how to integrate as many of Egan's cognitive tools as possible in teaching the unit, while limiting the assessment tools to ones perhaps more in keeping with the spirit of imaginative education. For that reason I did not use any of the quantitative measures that I had employed in the first study, such as the C.T.B.S., but relied instead upon my Journal, discussions with the classroom teacher, a written response to imaginative education on the part of the teacher, surveys of the students, and assessment of engagement and literacy using the rubrics from the first study. I also had the students work in groups formed on the basis of learning style to explore how they might assist each other in developing their imaginations. I used a different form of assessment in which all of the students combined their efforts to produce a group project in which they taught the rest of the school what they had learned about the Second World War, imagining themselves as various men and women. They also produced a visual display by drawing pictures which represented the period before, during, and after the war.

As part of this project too I decided to examine some specific aspects of literacy as it pertains to the IRP for British Columbia for social studies. That document lists a number of content and skills objectives which are relevant to this unit, and so I decided to investigate whether imaginative education could meet the particular demands of the IRP, not just the general notion of literacy as the capacity to read and write, or the notion of literacy which I had developed in the pilot study as having to do with narrative engagement and cognitive skills. In other words, if literacy can be defined as “a set of cognitive tools that we develop as we become literate” (Egan, 2004), then what do these tools look like in the study of history? How can we mediate students’ growing understanding as they develop these tools? What is the zone of proximal development that they “inhabit” at this age, and how can we best use their imaginations to “grow” their cognitive tools to expand that zone? Can the Romantic type of understanding be developed at this age so that students can move into the Philosophic type in later years? More specifically, given the content of the unit, can students engage on a more abstract level with ethical issues as they arise in our discussions?

## **7.2: Classroom Context**

The class with which I worked for the second study was a different grade six group, but with the same teacher as the first class. The class composition in many respects mirrored the composition of the pilot study. There were 24 students in all, of whom six were First Nations. Although a C.T.B.S. was not used with this group, the range of ability was very similar to the pilot study group in the opinion of the classroom teacher. One of the Aboriginal boys was working on approximately a grade two level, based on the classroom teacher’s assessment of his writing and reading ability. Another was on a grade four level, approximately. One of the

Aboriginal girls was a non-attender, coming to school perhaps twice a week, and being unwilling to participate when she did come. Another First Nations girl was very withdrawn, and until the study began, refused to write more than a few sentences for any assignment. The other two Aboriginal students were working at or near grade level. Among the mainstream students, there were four boys who were very good writers, with superior vocabularies and a good mastery of sentence fluency. There was one girl who was also above grade level, based on her writing and reading ability. Five of the students were identified by the subject teacher as being in need of learning assistance, although none was available. The rest of the students were typical of grade six students, with abilities at or near grade level.

One interesting distinction between this group and the last was that I was beginning the study in September, rather than February. I was surprised at the difference even five months of schooling could make to a class of students. When I began the pilot study, most of the students had had enough writing and reading instruction that I did not have to work on very basic skills, but could move into the writing of narratives fairly easily. But with the second group, I found that some of them were not only reluctant, but in some cases unable to write more than a few sentences. As the study progressed, however, this changed dramatically.

One important difference in this study was that I asked the regular classroom teacher to become more involved in the teaching part of the study, instead of being an observer while I taught. She also worked with the students on the art and language arts sections. This allowed me to step back into the role of observer, and to work more closely with individual children. As in the first study, she also integrated her interest in art, completing with the students a series of pictures about the war.

### 7.3: Content of the Unit

For this study, I once again focused on history as a vehicle for imaginative education. This time the topic was the Second World War and the Holocaust, both of which are regular topics for grade six, often taught as one aspect of the goal of social responsibility. However, according to the classroom teacher, the usual approach places much more emphasis on the notion of developing a sense of responsibility in students, rather than focusing on a detailed study of the war or the Holocaust. There are some excellent support materials available, and I supplemented these with my own resources. The regular classroom teacher also decided to teach the language arts component in parallel with the history/social studies unit, and many of the students read books of their own choosing on the Second World War and the Holocaust as the unit proceeded. This provided the opportunity for a great deal of cross-referencing between what the students were reading and what I was talking about in class. On several occasions, in fact, some of the students would jump up from their desks, run over to where the books were kept, and come back excitedly pointing to a passage or a picture that went along with our class discussions. I would then turn the discussion over to them, and they would explain to the class what it was they had been reading, and how it related to our topic.

For this unit, I began the planning process by using a combination of Egan's (2004) frameworks for Romantic/Mythic understanding. I began by identifying what I felt to be the most important aspect of teaching about the Holocaust and the Second World War. This is critical to imaginative education, because it acts to frame the meaning of the details and ideas that the unit will cover. It is the "big ideas" that act to make the learning coherent for the entire unit. Egan asks us to consider what it is about any topic that is worthwhile teaching. What is emotionally

engaging about the topic? Why should it matter to us? (Egan, 2004). For the introduction to the unit, I told the students that they would learn a great deal about history, and about some aspects of human nature. I informed them they they would be encountering ideas about racism, stereotyping, and discrimination. The most important idea that we used as the “glue” that held the unit together was that of human rights: what should people expect as fair treatment from others, on both a personal and a social level? This seemed to capture their attention, and I referred to the main ideas at least once every lesson to act as a bridge between them and the actual content of the lesson for that day.

I then considered what aspects of these main ideas would emotionally engage the students and evoke their sense of wonder. I framed this section as a series of questions to be answered: What does it mean to have a sense of wonder about the Holocaust? Can we ask how the Jewish people managed to maintain their humanity in the face of Nazi brutality? Can we see faint signs of hope for the human condition in the response of people like Schindler? Can we generalize our sense of disgust and outrage at the Nazi’s treatment of the Jews to other horrific acts of brutality, such as the South African apartheid system, the treatment of African-Americans, or the way in which Aboriginal people have been treated in North America? How can students relate these events of long ago and far away to their own lifeworlds? What conclusions can we reach about how we ought to treat other people in general? We ended the unit by talking about the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, so that the students would realize that discrimination and prejudice are not simply things that affected people far away and long ago.

Drawing from the Romantic framework, I then attempted to isolate the heroic elements and qualities that could be found in the Second World War and the Holocaust, and set the content in story form. The main quality that I focused on

was simply the courage of the Jewish people in the face of Nazi oppression, and the courage of the people who helped them. I explored these ideas by relating a number of stories about the Jewish resistance, Anne Frank and other Jewish people whose stories have come down to us. I showed them a video called "Daniel's Story" about a young Jewish boy who lost his entire family, and asked them to picture themselves in the same situation. At the same time, during language arts, the students were reading similar stories about other Jewish children. I had them write a narrative of what it would have been like to have been on a train going to a death camp, and had the children connect their own emotional responses to the events of the stories.

In order to balance the bleakness of this material with something more positive, I had the students do some research on people who had been saved, or who had acted as heroes. This provided a kind of binary opposite: the horror and brutality of the Nazis was even further contrasted and delineated by the courage and compassion of those who had helped the Jews. The students were very interested in learning how Schindler saved so many Jewish people, and as a follow-up activity, I had them research the net for more stories of the heroes of the Holocaust. To develop more Aboriginal content, they then researched the role played by Aboriginal heroes, and wrote a report on what those people had contributed.

For the part of the unit which examined the Second World war, I told them many stories about how the Battle of Britain was fought, about the Canadian forces and their role in D Day, and how the United States almost didn't join the war. I gave them a series of notes on the overhead, and embellished the notes as much as I could with specific stories about particular individuals, or particular events. One of the observations that I made was that it is far easier to engage students' imaginations by talking about concrete events than it is to engage them while

talking about abstract ideas. But once they are involved emotionally and imaginatively with the particulars, they can be led to an appreciation of the more abstract concepts. Another way of putting this is that the concrete events actually demonstrate the abstractions; they are not simply events, but are made more meaningful when the ideas of good/bad, courage/cruelty etc., as binary opposites, are used to make the abstractions more vivid and human.

Images and drama are an important part of the planning Mythic/Romantic framework that I was employing, so while all of this research and writing was going on, the students were also developing their ideas in the form of works of art. They began by setting up a poster display outside the classroom divided into three sections: before the war, during the war, and after the war. As they did the unit, they progressed chronologically, and the classroom teacher took them for a period and had them make cartoons showing the most important events of the time. They drew the Depression in Germany, for example, and showed people wheeling barrows of money to buy a loaf of bread. This was followed by Hitler making speeches, and the rise of the Nazi party. For the period during the war, they worked in groups and drew cartoons showing the period of the war which they were researching. They showed the Battle of Britain, Pearl Harbour, D Day, the fall of Hitler, and the bombing of Hiroshima.

By the end of the unit, the students had focused on a particular part of the war and, in groups, researched that part to become experts. Then they used the information they had gathered to personalize the ideas by writing Journal entries, finding pictures that would support their ideas, and writing a script to be presented in front of the school. I found it interesting that in both studies, students seemed to automatically gravitate towards public performances of their understanding. Perhaps imaginative education somehow naturally leads to the creation of larger and larger canvases upon which students can display their feeling for and

understanding of the material. As this unit was progressing, the students were also preparing for the Remembrance Day ceremonies. As the grade six class, it was their job to put on the major part of the presentation. The students wrote stories and poems based on our class discussions, then read them to the entire school as part of the ceremony. These poems and stories then became part of the after the war display in the hallway.

We then did some research on the Japanese internment camps in British Columbia during the war so that the students would understand that the atrocities committed by the Nazis were not simply isolated incidents, or attributable to some flaw in the German character, but part of a pattern of behaviour to which all people can fall victim. I was hoping to stimulate a sense of revolt against that kind of behaviour, and a sense of idealism about how the world ought to be. We discussed what had happened to the Japanese in Canada during the war, and the students wrote a mock letter to the Prime Minister of Canada protesting the treatment of Japanese Canadians.

#### **7.4: Cognitive Tools and Teaching Strategies**

As the unit progressed, I employed as many different cognitive tools as possible to engage their interest and develop their understanding. In the pilot study, I had focused on narrative as a means of developing literacy, and on engaging students in an imaginative manner. I continued to use that strategy, as it had proven to be so successful in the pilot study. But here I wished to move beyond this technique to develop and integrate as many other imaginative tools as possible. I was also interested in investigating the question of how the techniques of imaginative education could be used in developing students' reading abilities, as the first study had focused to a large extent on narrative writing as a measure of

literacy development. Another focus of my research interest was to find out how these different tools could be successfully integrated, not only with the regular techniques used by most classroom teachers, but with each other. One of the problems facing any attempt to change teacher practice, it seems to me, is that teachers are so busy that asking them to do something new often just means doing something extra. Yet teachers are already fairly successful in many ways using the techniques which they have developed themselves over years of actual classroom teaching. Unless new ideas can be successfully integrated with regular classroom practice, or unless these ideas can be shown to be more successful, then there is no real reason why the practices already operating in classrooms should be changed. At the very least, it would be difficult to make such an argument to most classroom teachers.

One of the issues that has arisen as a result of the pilot study is the question of whether imaginative education can be thought of as a set of techniques, or whether it is really an entirely new approach to curriculum, and ought not to be reduced to "techniques" without seriously damaging its overall integrity. After all, many of the strategies employed in both studies, such as the use of personal narratives, might be thought of as fairly standard approaches to curriculum, at least by some teachers. So how should imaginative education be thought of in the classroom, if not as a set of techniques? What makes this approach different?

Part of the problem here is that from a theoretical point of view, imaginative education begins from a different perspective on what the purpose of education ought to be. Rather than focusing on content as the centerpiece of the curriculum, it asks us to consider what it would look like if students actually understood the content, and what different types of understanding there can be. But if this approach becomes merely a set of techniques, it can lose its overall coherence,

and become another set of strategies to be used to attain the same content and skills objectives as other methodologies.

From a classroom-based perspective, however, the problem looks different. Classroom teachers must move from a theoretical perspective to one that can be practically applied in day-to-day situations in the class. If we ask how knowledge can be humanized, for example, it does not follow that simply reading stories to students will humanize the content. Somehow they must be drawn towards an emotional engagement with the material. This can be achieved, for example, by the use of a strategy which calls upon them to examine how they think they might respond if they were placed in the same situation as a historical character. But in order for them to utilize their imaginations in this way, they need to have something to “hang their imaginations on,” so to speak. Dramatic images, as a cognitive tool, are useful for giving them a sense of connection to the events. Personalized stories of children their own age can also be very effective, as can the other cognitive tools, when employed in the appropriate manner. Strategies can be thought of as a practical application of cognitive tools in a way that ensures that the students will be using the tools as they engage the content of the unit. Strategies are the “how to” for utilizing the cognitive tools.

And all of these feelings generated by the use of cognitive tools must somehow be connected to the overarching ideas of the unit: what are we to think about these feelings? What are we to learn from this? Simply arousing an emotional response may lead to greater engagement, but not necessarily to deeper learning. What Egan’s cognitive tools do is provide a framework for the specific job of developing strategies that will blend to create an overall experience for children in which their understanding is developed and expanded in a particular way. So the strategies that are employed cannot be isolated from the context of the meaning of the unit as a whole, and must always be brought back to some form of

connection to the more abstract ideas and emotional connections that frame the content. When students demonstrate their understanding at the conclusion of the unit, it is that kind of understanding that is most valuable, not simply memorizing the content, which is a vehicle for development, not an end in itself. By this I mean that students may very well memorize names, dates and places, but unless they can demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of those events, and the importance of the role played by the people, they have not really acquired an in-depth understanding of the content.

In order to develop that kind of understanding as an overarching goal, then, I employed a set of strategies which I hoped would create a sequence of deepening understandings for students, as well as more engagement with ethical issues. The KWL chart is the first strategy I employed, because it is a way to isolate what students already know, and what it is that they wish to learn. It is not a particularly imaginative tool, but it does encourage questions from students rather than framing the unit as something that is driven only by the teacher's interests and demands. It begins to stimulate their imaginations by allowing them to use their own curiosity about a topic. Curiosity itself can be thought of as a natural component of our sense of wonder and mystery, as can the capacity to raise questions.

The first thing I had the students do after we had identified what they would like to learn about the Second World War and the Holocaust was to have them imagine that they were being bullied in the school yard. I let them choose the role of bully, victim, or observer, and had them role play for one minute. Then they switched roles, and did it again. They then wrote for five minutes on what they had felt as victim, bully, or observer. The class discussion that followed provided a metaphoric entry point to an examination of what happened to the Jewish people during the war, and Hitler's role in their persecution. This notion that Hitler was a

kind of school yard bully was then extended throughout the unit to act as a kind of metaphoric “glue” binding the ideas together. From the very beginning of the unit, we focused on the ethical implications of what the students were learning, and attempted to tie those notions to the students’ own experience. We emphasized the obligation of the observer to do more than observe in the school yard scenario, and then asked them to generalize about the role of the allies in the Second World War with regard to the plight of the Jewish people. The power of this strategy is that it combines metaphoric understanding on the one hand with emotional engagement on the other through role play, culminating in a writing exercise which combines the concepts with an emotional and ethical response.

Role play is a strategy which seems to offer itself naturally as one to be used in imaginative education. After using it to develop the notion of Hitler and the Nazis as playground bullies, I then asked the students to imagine that when they went home, that their parents had told them that there would be some changes made in the household. They would no longer be allowed to eat with the rest of the family, but would have to eat alone when everyone else was finished. Furthermore, they wouldn’t have the same food, but scraps from the cooking. They would be required to do up all of the dishes, and clean up after everyone else. They would be forced to sleep in the basement without a bed, and not be allowed to go outside to play with the other children. All of their toys would be taken away, and they would be denied the right to watch television or read any books. I then had them confront their “parents” who would not give any reasons for this strange and discriminatory behaviour. In this role play scenario, I had them give reasons why they should be treated just the same as the rest of the children in their families, and had the parents refuse to give any good reasons for the behaviour except that they were somehow “different” and “inferior”. This led to a class discussion in which we examined the notion of rights, and whether they felt it would be fair for some people

to have more rights than others, and how it felt to be denied their rights on the grounds of being thought “inferior”. This proved to be a very powerful metaphoric way of discussing exactly what was wrong with Hitler’s notions of race and rights, and led to a more wide-ranging discussion of how people had been treated historically around the world.

Following these initial role plays, I began to give them notes providing a brief overview of some of the main incidents of the war, such as Dunkirk, and the Battle of Britain. In both cases I tried to relate the larger events to particular incidents and, in particular, I emphasized the heroic elements in these events. I explained to the students how individuals had set out for the shores of France during Dunkirk to rescue the British Expeditionary Force, and how they had been attacked relentlessly by the German forces. Many of the students were moved almost to tears when they heard of the sacrifices that the common British sailors had made to rescue their soldiers from the beaches under heavy enemy fire. The students were enthralled by stories of how the young British pilots had managed to defeat the much larger and more experienced German Luftwaffe, and thus secure a period of time for the Allies to rally their forces and stage the D Day invasion four years later. All of these stories were embellished by as many pictures as I could locate on the net or in books. The students provided many examples from the material that they were reading as well, and so we managed to create a very vivid and engaging visual montage to accompany the stories. Here the strategy consisted of combining imagery with an appeal to the heroic qualities of the actual people involved in historical events. In a sense I was attempting to vivify the imagery to make it have emotional depth for the students. Just showing them pictures does not necessarily engage them for long. After all, their world is filled with images. But rarely are those images connected to the lives of real men and women who displayed heroic qualities.

A strategy combining the notion of heroism with imagery was to ask the students to search the net for images that they found particularly interesting or evocative about the Second World War. They then used the pictures as a stimulus to write about the war. For example, one boy found a picture of a dogfight during the Battle of Britain to be very powerful, so he wrote about it from the perspective of a fighter pilot involved in the battle. Then he shared his picture and narrative with the class, and they asked him questions about it while he stayed in role. These narratives were then folded into a larger group presentation to the school.

While this discussion of the war was happening, we also spent a great deal of time focusing on the events of the Holocaust, and the impact it had on the Jewish people. Here I had the students write diary entries taking on the role of the Jewish children about whom they were reading in their language arts unit. They read their stories out in class, and I commented on the effective devices and narrative techniques that they were employing, as well as discussing the ethical implications of what they were writing. At the same time, the classroom teacher was supplementing the students' capacity to write by teaching them some of the basics of narration, such as effective openings, creating suspense, employing imagery in description, developing character, and the creation of voice. Taken together, these two teaching methodologies, one traditional, one more imaginative, combined to produce some very effective and engaging material. When I spoke to the classroom teacher about this integration, her view was that it was not only workable, but in fact essential: without the structure provided by the traditional approach, the narratives would be incoherent; without the content of the imaginative engagement, they would be ineffective.

As part of this section of the unit, we took the students to see a reenactment of the *Diary of Anne Frank* which was being presented in Vancouver. They took part in an audience discussion with Dr. Krell, himself a survivor who had lived a life

of hiding much as Anne Frank had done. When the students returned to the classroom, we discussed the play, and the students wrote a diary entry in the role of someone hiding from the Nazis. Here they drew upon the imagery from the play with the imaginative recreation of the life of someone who was in the same position that Anne was. The images and discussion that happened during the play then acted as a kind of mediation for the students, who were then able to use that imagery as part of the structure of what they wrote.

An important part of this unit was teaching the students how to question: a part of the cognitive tool of our capacity for wonder and mystery. The notion of having students ask questions also turned out to be valuable in developing their reading ability. This was done initially in the context of having them learn how to take notes, but I later expanded this to using questions to guide our research in a number of areas, involving both the Second World War and the Holocaust. For the Holocaust, for example, I asked them to imagine that they were able to ask Anne Frank or another Jewish child some questions about life under the Nazis. The students wrote two questions each that they would like to ask a Jewish child, and then shared those questions with a partner. We then shared the questions as a class. This was later expanded into their research groups, where we had them dig for details about the Second World War.

One issue that arose as a consequence of focusing on the tool of questioning is why we value students giving us answers to our questions, but don't seem to value their questions. Of course most teachers would agree that we want students to ask questions, but most of those questions are thought to be valuable in the context of the overall purpose that the teacher has chosen for the unit. When and if students ask a question that seems to go "outside the box," it is often treated as a disruption, rather than as an opportunity for developing deeper understanding. We might begin to ask ourselves a few questions of our own: how can we

encourage more questioning by students? How can we use their questions to develop deeper levels of meaning and understanding, rather than simply asking our own questions of them? Could we use questions as a means of assessing student understanding and engagement? How can questions be used most effectively as a pre-reading exercise? What separates an imaginative question from a more mundane one? I spent some time emphasizing the importance of questions not only as part of writing, but as part of reading as well.

One of the questions that I had raised in the pilot study was how imaginative education could be used to develop reading skills. At the core of reading is the issue of comprehension, so by teaching students to ask questions, and by giving them an imaginatively-based purpose for their reading, I hoped to improve their reading ability. I began to focus on questions as a means of predicting what would happen in a story as it unfolded, either before the students read the story, or as it was being read. Another important strategy was to have the students imagine themselves in the same situation, and to ask them to discuss how they might feel, what they might think, what they might see and hear. Then when we read the story or in some cases watched the video, we compared what they had imagined with what had actually occurred. Although I did not focus in this study on assessing reading through standardized tests, my impressions were that student engagement and comprehension of the material both increased as a consequence of these types of imaginative activities.

I was also interested in determining the extent to which other curricular outcomes could be met while using imaginative techniques. Here too the objectives listed in the social studies IRP for British Columbia were helpful. I should point out that the IRP for grade six lists only some of these outcomes: we drew from several parts of the IRP for different grade levels because the content of the unit, the history of the Second World War, was not specifically covered by the

grade six outcomes, but fits into the goal of social responsibility. The IRP outcomes that seemed most relevant, drawn from across several grade levels, were that students demonstrate an ability to organize and present an oral report, to locate information in a variety of sources, to raise questions based on research, to work in a collaborative manner, to separate fact from opinion, to detect bias, to detect and separate cause and effect, and to make generalizations based on historical facts.

I found it to be very useful to focus on the IRP outcomes as providing a general teaching direction, while drawing on the cognitive tools for strategies by which those objectives could be met while improving both reading and writing. These kinds of outcomes seem to provide a bridge to the Philosophic understanding that the students will be growing into as they develop. What helps draw these elements together is thinking about the objectives from the imaginative perspective: what does separating fact from opinion look like, for example, from the Romantic framework of understanding? What kind of strategies could be employed that would meet this objective? What elements of the Mythic framework might also be incorporated into this strategy? How does this ultimately lead to the Philosophic type of understanding? Here I am interested in particular strategies and cognitive tools that I found useful in meeting particular objectives.

To meet the IRP outcome of separating fact from opinion, for example, I had the students write a news report that was meant to give the facts of the war from a Jewish perspective versus the perspective of a German soldier. I began by asking the guiding question "How would those two people look at these events differently?" Then the students were given a set of facts, divided into pairs, and asked to write the news report from two different perspectives. They then compared their articles, and we read out a number from each side, and asked the class to comment on what they had heard. I went over each of the news reports which were read to the class, and asked the class to tell me what part was factual,

and what part was opinion. The students became fairly adept at this rather quickly, and as we had them read more material about the war, I asked them to be on the lookout for opinions as distinct from facts.

This notion of approaching research from an imaginative perspective also allowed me to utilize what Egan refers to as the “literate eye,” a set of tools for organizing information in complex ways, such as making lists, flowcharts, and diagrams. This also fits with the notion of transforming information into new forms. Whenever we could, the classroom teacher and I used lists, diagrams, and overheads to illustrate ideas. I found it particularly effective to have the students make lists, or to employ some form of categorization, before they began writing. The ability to turn a chart or table into a written form is a valuable tool of literacy, but is one which is not often directly addressed, at least not until students are older. For example, one way in which we combined a number of cognitive tools was to have the students read and take notes on an article about Aboriginal heroes. We had the students write their notes in the form of a chart, in which the six essential questions (who, what, where, when, why and how) formed part of the grid, and the particulars of each hero form the other. Then the students were asked to rewrite the information in the form of a news story, using their own words to take the information from the chart and cast it in paragraph form. This proved surprisingly hard for many of them to do. They required a great deal of help in navigating the article itself, and in extracting the information. They were sometimes confused about where the information ought to be recorded, and were lost when the necessary information for a particular question was not available. I had to point out to them that not all articles will answer all of their questions, and that sometimes they had to read “between the lines” to fill in information that was not given, or only implied. Students appeared to approach the task with a kind of rigidity toward how the information ought to be conveyed in the article, and had very few coping

strategies to deal with gaps or omissions. On the one hand the chart seemed to force that kind of rigidity by opening up spaces to be filled. On the other hand, it acted as a guide for students to locate the essential ideas. Only more experience with this kind of approach to organizing information will allow the students to make allowances for the omissions, while taking advantage of the focusing power that the chart allows.

One important strategy is the use of hypothesis. Suppose that the Nazis had managed to defeat the British airmen in the Battle of Britain: how might the world be a different place? How might that affect the lives of the children in the room? What would it be like to live under the Nazis here in Canada? We had a long class discussion about these possibilities, and although this strategy did not involve introducing many new “facts” about the war, the speculation caused the students to use the facts they already possessed in new ways. This could have led to an exercise in narrative in which students wrote about living under the Nazis, but time limitation prevented that last step.

Another powerful strategy was to employ the idea of pretending. I had the students pretend that they were in a variety of situations such as a Jewish person who had captured a Nazi soldier, or a Jewish mother who had to choose between which of her children would accompany her to a death camp, and which one would be given over to be killed immediately. I asked the students to describe not only what they would do in that situation, but how they felt their actions would affect other people. Then the students chose one of the scenarios, and wrote a story in which they had two people confronting each other over the issue involved. This led to a great deal of impassioned writing, and some very interesting ethical arguments on the part of some of the students.

The last type of cognitive tool that I attempted to employ in this follow-up study was the notion of revolt and idealism, which had been inherent in the subject

matter from the beginning. To develop the notion that an ethical response requires that people respond on a higher ethical level than the behaviour which they are condemning, I had the students pretend that they were Jews who had captured a German soldier. I asked them what they should do with him, and initially, they simply wished to torture and kill him. After some class discussion, however, they came to realize that if they were to employ the same behaviour towards the Nazis that the Nazis were using against the Jews, then the Jews would have been morally the same as the Nazis. I then had them role play the scenario, and write a short narrative in which the German soldier and the Jewish captor have a conversation about what the Nazis are doing. I was particularly interested here in whether the students would be able to use dialogue as a means of demonstrating the nature of the ethical dilemma which the situation rests upon: is it morally correct to act retributively? What happens when you come to see your enemy as a particular human being, rather than simply as a symbol of oppression? I will discuss the students' responses to these issues in the Findings section.

### **7.5: Integrating Curricula**

As in the pilot study, I made every attempt to integrate other parts of the curricula with our study of the Holocaust and the Second World War. Once again I found that students seem to respond very well to learning about aspects of science and language arts in the context of their study of history. One topic of interest was the development of the atomic bomb, and how close the Germans had come to winning the war. Some of the students wanted to know how the bomb actually works, and so they focused their research project on Hiroshima and the development of atomic weapons. Other students wanted to know about the German's development of the V1 and V2 rockets, and how they worked. I took this

opportunity to teach the students some basics about atomic theory and rocket science. Had we the time, I might have taken the opportunity to have them build scale model rockets. The classroom teacher also spent a great deal of time with them on art projects based on their research into a particular aspect of the Second World War. Just as in the pilot project, I found that not only was I able to integrate other parts of the curriculum, but that the students' interest and engagement were heightened by the connections to the historical content. In general, the use of literature, art and drama seem to be a natural fit with imaginative education and the teaching of history.

### **7.6: Preliminary Findings**

During the pilot project, I had used a variety of instruments for gathering data on whether the students were developing their literacy skills, and whether they were engaged by the process and strategies of imaginative education. In this study, I was less concerned with gathering quantitative data, and more concerned with attempting to determine whether the strategies of imaginative education could lead to evidence of literacy development and engagement in a more integrated fashion. By this I mean that rather than examining specific elements of literacy such as vocabulary or comprehension, which are usually tested in a quantitative manner using a standardized instrument such as the C.T.B.S., I was interested in whether students could produce evidence of their engagement with the materials that demonstrated some of their growth in their ability to use cognitive tools. Here I was placing more emphasis on the definition of literacy that I had developed during the pilot study, based on Egan's ideas, as involving the set of cognitive tools which we have available to us as a consequence of our cultural heritage, and as necessarily engaging the imagination.

### 7.6.1: Working Together

One of the issues which I wished to address in this study was the way in which other types of classroom practice could be integrated with imaginative education. It is clear that teachers have devised many strategies and techniques that are successful with students that do not flow directly from an imaginative approach. It is likely that many teachers will be reluctant to abandon their current practices if those techniques with which they are familiar have to be superseded by new ones. But if it can be shown that much, if not most of what is successfully done in classroom can be integrated with more imaginative approaches, the road ahead may be easier.

In the first study, one of my interests was the question of how critical thinking might be integrated with imaginative education. In this study, I maintained much of that focus, but I became interested in whether learning style and cooperative education could also be used in conjunction with a more imaginative methodology. Here I am not interested in separating out the effects of the differing approaches as much as seeing whether they can be successfully integrated. One of the major assignments in this unit, then, involved creating groups of students chosen on the basis of learning style, and then giving them a task to perform together.

The task chosen was to have them research, write, and deliver a presentation to the school in which they taught the other students what they had learned about the Second World War. In part, this idea is based on Egan's notion that students at the Romantic stage enjoy learning about things in great detail in order to feel in command of part of reality. This is why they enjoy collecting things, or reading the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Here they took their initial

understanding, chose a particular part of the Second World War, and then went to the net to investigate it further. They wrote stories which reflected the perspectives of various people, and used the stories to deliver more information about the war. For example, one group decided to investigate the Battle of Britain, and then wrote four stories about the Battle based on the experiences of a British fighter pilot, a wife seeing her new husband fly away to fight, and so on. These stories were rehearsed in class, and then presented to the entire school in a special assembly. This was our means of ending the unit, and bringing to a closure the students' experiences. I decided to collect the students' stories at the end to evaluate them on the basis of their growth in the capacity to use cognitive tools, which I shall discuss in the next section.

Based on these results and my own observations of the students while they worked together, I came to the conclusion that there is a great deal of benefit in having students engage in these kinds of joint activities, provided that they have a clear focus, and are given help in scaffolding various parts of the assignment. Students at this age level need a great deal of help in organizing their approach to any task, imaginative or otherwise. When they are provided with sufficient scaffolding in the form of clearly defined objective and timelines, and when they are truly enjoying what they are doing, however, the group energy seems to be of benefit, as each student can build on the ideas of the others. These kinds of projects, like the play produced by the students in the pilot study, seem to be a natural culmination of their learning.

### **7.6.2: IRP Skills**

The other question which I had set for examination was the issue of whether the skills outlined in the IRP for history could be developed using the

imagination, and whether those skills would be reflected in the other assignments I had given them. The IRP outcomes that I had chosen were that students demonstrate an ability to organize and present an oral report, to locate information in a variety of sources, to raise questions based on research, to work in a collaborative manner, to separate fact from opinion, to detect bias, to detect and separate cause and effect, and to make generalizations based on historical facts.

Although by the end of the unit we were had not managed to address all of these skills, we had managed to address a significant number of them. The students had presented a number of oral reports as the unit progressed, and their ability to organize information in a logical (usually chronological) manner had improved significantly. In part this is due to teaching them a number of organizational patterns using graphic organizers such as compare/contrast charts, making lists, categorizing events, and completing mind maps.

They had also developed their ability to locate information using a variety of sources, although they continue to need a great deal of practice in this area. Many of them could already use the internet to locate information, but they need more help in using texts, particularly encyclopedias. They have shown some growth in their ability to raise questions, but more work needs to be done here as well. The kinds of questions that students ask tend to be of a literal nature with specific answers (closed questions), and they need more practice in learning how to ask more open-ended questions. The value of an imaginative approach here was obvious: students were free to wonder about how events might have turned out differently, or to ask questions about how people ought to behave in various circumstances. They certainly demonstrated, through the presentation, the capacity to work together. The imaginative task gave them a joint focus while allowing each of them an opportunity for individual work. We did some work on the skill of separating fact from opinion, and the students proved to be able to handle

the complexities of this task well. They were not as good at detecting bias, although we spent some time on this concept. We were not able to address the skill of separating cause and effect. I tested their ability to make generalizations based on historical data, with mixed results. What these results demonstrate, I think, is that the use of imaginative techniques is consistent with the demands of the IRP for the teaching of history/social studies, and is not an “add on” by any means. In fact, I suspect that many teachers would take a fairly imaginative approach to teaching many of these skills by default, because it seems to work so well.

### **7.6.3: Response of First Nations' Students**

Because the historical subject matter of this unit did not specifically allow a focus on First Nations content the way the study of Canadian history had done, I was somewhat concerned that the First Nations students would not engage the way they had with the pilot study. In this study, there were six Aboriginal students. Of those, one was close to dropping out, and there had been an intervention on the part of the school during the study to assess her chances of completing grade six. Of the other five, one girl was severely withdrawn, and had not taken part in many classroom activities, nor would she complete her work, particularly any written assignments. Two of the boys had suffered very difficult home environments, and were working below grade level. One boy and one girl were fairly good students, working at grade level.

As the study began, these students seemed to respond as they had to other units taught by the classroom teacher. The withdrawn girl remained withdrawn, and the non-writer refused to write more than a few lines. But as the unit continued, and students began to share their work, and to work together in small groups, as

the entire class, including the Aboriginal students, began to appear more interested in the activities. By the conclusion of the unit, those Aboriginal students who had been in the class for the entire unit were performing in a manner consistent with the class as a whole. I shall return to the specifics of their response in the following sections.

#### **7.6.4: The Voice of the Students: Engagement**

In this section of the results, I would like to discuss the specific comments of the students. In order to solicit their input, I had them complete an anonymous survey consisting of 11 questions pertaining to their response to the techniques of imaginative education (see Appendix # 4, amended for second study). In order to establish a kind of implicit triangulation with the pilot study, I used the same survey for both groups of students. Of the students in the follow up study, only 19 of the 24 students were present the day the survey was completed, the others being ill or already on Christmas vacation. Some of the students didn't fill in all of the questions, and on occasion, filled them out incorrectly. For the most part, however, their answers were clear.

In this survey, I once again asked the students how they would rank imaginative education compared to regular classroom instruction on a 10 point scale, where 5 represents typical classroom learning. Once again the students showed a marked preference for this type of activity, with an average score of 8.9 for the "mainstream" students, and a score of 9.4 for the Aboriginal students. It was interesting that the Aboriginal students found this type of instruction more valuable, but this could simply be an anomaly due to the few responses (5) that I had to work with. It is not clear either that a difference of .5 on this scale can be thought of as meaningful.

Students also ranked the activities that were “imaginative” more highly than the regular classroom fare. I offered them a choice of watching documentary videos, doing readings, writing Journals, taking notes, doing art work, or watching live theatre. These were the major activities that we had completed during the unit. Writing Journal entries, art, and live theatre were the imaginative activities, while taking notes and doing readings were the less imaginative ones. Watching documentaries on video is an activity that is between the categories, as it is fairly common in most classrooms, but does employ imagery and narrative. Only 18 students filled in all of the categories, with one student choosing Journals as his favorite, and then declining to rank the others. Overall, the students ranked writing Journals as their favorite activity 9 times out of 18, while watching videos was second with 5 students. Surprisingly, only 1 student ranked art as his favorite activity, but these students do a great deal of art for other parts of the curriculum, and so they may feel that it is nothing new. Two students named live theatre as their favorite activity. No one chose notes as a favorite activity, and only 1 student chose reading as a favorite activity. One student wrote in “role playing” as his favorite, as well as marking “Journals” as his favorite. (In retrospect, role playing ought to have been one of the choices offered). Six students chose art as their second favorite activity, and 7 chose live theatre as their second favorite. Only 2 students ranked watching videos as their second favorite activity, while 2 students ranked writing Journals as their second favorite activity. No one chose note taking as a second favorite. The third favorite activity was reading, with 6 students choosing it. Videos were ranked third by 9 students, while 2 chose reading and 1 chose writing Journals. No one chose notes, and 3 chose art and live theatre. Watching videos was the fourth favorite activity for only 2 students. Reading is the fourth favorite activity for 6 students, while writing Journals is fourth for 3 students.

Of course, this kind of pseudo-statistical analysis cannot be taken too seriously except as a general indication of interest on the part of students, and perhaps other explanations could be adduced to support this finding. On the other hand, if we examine the comments made by the students in response to a number of questions on the survey, we find overwhelming support for the use of imaginative techniques over more typical school methodology. For example, in response to the question "Why did you like that part of our unit on the history of the Holocaust and the Second World War," (that is, the student's favorite activity) the responses indicated a very strong preference for the use of imagination. The students said (copied verbatim)

- "I like the journals the most because you got to use your imagination."
- "I liked live theatre and art because they are both are the same."
- "I like it the most because theatre is cool and it gets my attention."
- (Journal entries) "because its fun and you get to put facts and make up."
- (Journal entries) "Because I can easily express my thoughts and feelings."
- "I like the readings the best because I can imagine whats happening and its interesting!"
- (Videos) "because you could watch the pictures of the bombings and of the war."
- "I like journal entries the best because you get to pretend most of the time."
- (Journal entries) "because I like to be the person in the event and take on it's part."
- "Journal entries because I am good second art because its fun."
- (Journal entries) "Because we could put down our feelings and make up stories, which is fun."
- (Journal entries) "Because I love using my imagination."
- "I like journal entries because I could express my feelings."
- "I liked journal entries because you can use amagination."

These responses clearly indicate that the students found the more imaginative types of activities to be more engaging, supporting the “quantitative” analysis of their responses. Another question I asked pertained to the specific focus of the Journal writing activity, the attempt to have students take on the persona of various characters. The question was “Did you like imagining that you were different characters throughout history? Was it easy for you or difficult?” The students responded:

- “yes, easy”
- “I really like imagining. It was just at the right level for me.”
- “Yes I did, and it was kind of difficult”
- “I liked alot and I think it was easy.”
- “No, easy”
- “Yes I liked imagining. No, it was not difficult.”
- “yes it was fun and it was easy.”

This kind of comment showed up on almost every paper, with only 2 students saying that they did not enjoy imagining being different characters. The Aboriginal students too seemed to feel that using their imaginations in this way was fun:

- “Yes easy”
- “Yes I liked imaging that I was pertending that I am a different characters. it was  
easy for me!”
- “Yes easy”
- “No”
- “Yes easy”

I was also interested in whether students perceived themselves to have improved in their writing, whether they felt that the task had become easier as time

went on, and whether they had learned more about history. The Aboriginal students responded

- “Of course! I didn’t know anything about WWII! And my writing is 10 times better.
- “I learned to put a lot of feeling my writing. Yes.”
- “history because I learn more.”
- I learned more about History of the Holocaust. and writing about them.”
- I learned more about writing because now I use my imagination more.”

Comments from the “mainstream” students were of the same nature, with some of the most telling comments being

- “Yes, did, yes I learned a lot Yes I learned about writing because I learnt how to be right in the problem.”
- “I learned how to look at different views of people. Oh yes! Yes because I learned how to take in people’s thinking.”
- “I leard to use images to write.”
- “I learned how it would feel to get your rites taken away.”
- “ both similes and metaphors and a lot of history like the Battle of Brit.”
- “I learned way more both things because I can discribe things better and I learned the main thing about world war 2.”
- “I learned what it might feel like to be somebody else.”

I also asked students if they would like to use similar techniques to learn about other parts of the curriculum, such as science and math. Here the students were a bit more divided, with 12 of 19 indicating that they would like to learn this way in science and math, and 7 saying they would not. One of the flaws in this survey is that I did not ask the students to explain why they would or would not like to learn this way in other parts of the curriculum, so I can only speculate that they may feel that the curriculum is somehow naturally divided into subject areas, and that for some reason art and writing should not play role in math and science.

Perhaps too they felt that if these techniques were to be used everywhere, they might lose some of their appeal. Only further research might resolve this question.

#### **7.6.5: Voice of the Students: Big Ideas**

One of the questions in which I was interested in this study was the issue of whether imaginative education could provide a scaffold for the movement from Romantic to Philosophic understanding beginning in grade six. Here I was interested in the students' capacity to make generalizations, to see the "Big Ideas" that underpinned the entire unit. As Egan has pointed out (1997) the transition from the Romantic to the Philosophic framework usually takes place around the age of 15. He talks about the shift from human qualities as giving meaning to what students are studying to the notion that ideas can become the objects of interest. Rather than looking for the meaning in human qualities such as courage or compassion, he argues that students using Philosophic understanding are ready to discuss what courage and compassion are as abstractions, that is, to examine the meaning of courage and compassion as ideas.

The students with whom I was working are still clearly operating using Romantic understanding, but I was hopeful that they would demonstrate the beginnings of the power of abstraction. At the end of the unit, I asked them to write down three big ideas that they feel that they learned from studying the Holocaust and the Second World war. I was curious to see whether they could understand that the underpinning of the unit had to do with issues such as the moral implications of racism and the necessity of human rights in forming the political and ethical heritage of liberal democracy. We had discussed some of these ideas at the beginning of the unit, but at that time, these ideas were merely words. How well could students connect the experiences that they had had, and the information

that they had been researching, to the abstract ideas with which the unit had begun? I asked them to write down three things that they had learned that they thought were important, and give a reason why that idea is important.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the results are mixed. Some of the students demonstrated the ability to draw some fairly clear ethical notions from our studies, while many seemed to think that the most important thing had to do with particular facts about the war. Even students who were able to show evidence of the capacity to think philosophically struggled to put their ideas into words, and seemed somewhat confused. Some responses:

### **Student One**

- People have rites no matter what the race.

Because everyone in the world is human and Hitler didn't understand this.

- I learned special facts about the second world war.

Because when I am older it will help me to know about world war II.

- I learned about offensive words like discrimination.

Because it is always important to know these words and have a better vocabulary.

### **Student Two (Aboriginal Student)**

- The Holocaust

I think its important because its good to learn about now so we know it won't happen again.

- Human rights

I think its important because we need to know how not having rites can effect people.

**Student Three**

## • Human Rights

I think human rights are important because everyone should get a chance to decide for themselves. At that time Jews didn't have their rights they weren't even allowed to go in public.

## • Because people deserve to have emotions.

The only emotion that Jews had was crying. They deserve more. The Germans took everything away even emotions.

## • racism

Racism is the most harsh thing ever. Hitler is a racist. People were racist to Jews because Hitler told them that they are the reason that Germany lost the war.

**Student Four (Aboriginal Student)**

## • I thought the most important was the battles.

It think it was important because the battles because it involves with the ww II.

## • I thought the most important was the ww II.

Because there are a lot of men that risked their lives and half of them gave up their families.

## • When Germans took Jews into concentration camps.

Because they should never have brought them in here.

**Student Five**

## • Human rights

It's important because if we didn't we would not be able to do lots of things. The Germans took a lot of the Jewish people's rights away, so they could not do a lot of things like, they weren't allowed to have a job, and other stuff.

- What Germans did to Jews

It's important because now I know what Germans did to the Jews. They took them to extermination camps, did experiments on them, gased them, and took them in the hills and shot them. Now, I know what the Germans did to the Jews I think it was really unexceptable.

- Japanese Canadians

It's important because I never knew that a Canadian Prime Minister would do such a thing to the Japanese. Like take away their rights; not allowing them to vote, selling their land, and splitting up their families. What he did was just like what they did to the Jews. He was no better then Hitler.

**Student Six** (Aboriginal Student)

- When the Japanese and Italians joined Hitler.

I think it is important because if Japan didn't bomb Pearl harbor America woudn't have joined the war.

- When the Nazis started taking away Jews etc.

It is important because it's just plain wrong to take human rights away.

- What the Russians started doing after the war in Russia.

it's important because attacking people after they attack you is wrong and then you're becoming you're enemy.

I found this last comment perhaps the most interesting and insightful of all of the statements made by the students. I recognized this sentiment, because I had heard it in a story that this young man had written, and which he had read to the class. He had take the role of a German soldier for this writing assignment, and had tried to reveal how a German soldier might feel if he were put into the situation into which the Germans had placed the Jews. The students were to write a

dialogue between the German, who had been taken prisoner by a Jewish fighter, and the Jewish interrogator, who demanded to know why he shouldn't just kill the German soldier. After pleading for his life, the German soldier suddenly says to his Jewish captor "Because if you kill me, you'll become just like me. And if I deserve to die for what I have done, so do you." Although not stated in the story as an abstract principle of ethical behaviour, this piece of dialogue represents, I think, a truly moral insight on the part of the writer, one which took the entire class, including myself and the regular classroom teacher, completely by surprise. This led to a general class conversation on that point.

Although I feel that most of the students were not very good at making generalizations or in drawing abstract conclusions, some of them were able to draw some abstract ideas some of the time, and on occasion, I think, reveal the capacity for deep insights. It is difficult to be sure, but I suspect that this kind of assignment in which students are asked to think deeply about what they are learning is fairly rare. If so, it may explain why many of them seemed to find this a difficult challenge. But I suspect that more practice using ideas on this level may be a necessary element in their capacity to think philosophically when they are older. The growth from the Romantic to the Philosophic type of understanding cannot take place in a vacuum. Furthermore, if I look at the responses closely, I can see the seeds of abstract thought throughout, even though the students are not yet adept at expressing their ideas in this manner. They seem to be more at home examining their feelings about ethical issues in the context of their narratives than in the context of an "exam". More practice could very well lead to a more articulate response on their part, but only research carried out over a longer period of time might resolve this issue.

### 7.6.6: Voice of the Students: Cognitive Tools and Literacy

For this study, rather than utilize standardized tests such as the CTBS, or to look at the average scores on the rubric for the entire class, I decided to examine individual students to research in more detail how their writing reflected their growth over time. Rather than looking at rubric scores as individual numbers, I decided to examine the changes to the students in depth, and to look more closely at some of the aspects of literacy which I wished to investigate. The question here is how the students' capacity to use the cognitive tools such as imagery, simile and metaphor, binary opposites, the literate eye, and revolt and idealism are being used in their writing. Would the students demonstrate the ability to consider other alternatives, to form hypotheses or consider alternative outcomes? I was also interested in how certain features of their ability to develop narrative understanding, such as interior monologue, dialogue, and the manipulation of time, have changed over the course of the unit. If, as I argued in Part One, understanding is often narrative in nature, then how has the students' capacity to create effective narration developed in four months? Furthermore, I wanted to see whether there would be evidence not only that the students could incorporate the facts of history as they were learning them in class, but also whether the students' personal connection to those facts through story would become more evident. Would the students demonstrate, for example, a greater degree of ethical awareness as a result of their narrative engagement? Would they be able to incorporate their feelings as characters? I examined the work of the students, from which I attempted to draw a representative cross sample. Below is the verbatim work of three students, with my discussion of how I see their work evolving over time.

### Student A's First Text, Nov. 1

Hello this is my life when I was in hiding. After the Natzis came to power my mother and father had to go for a trip. They sed that they would see me again but I thought they wouldn't. I had to go with my nabors to hide with them they sed we had to play hidengoseek. When we where hiding it was usually sad but some times they chered me up but it was still very boring. One day my neighbours son triped and it made lots of noise and you could here it ecohing through out the building. Just because of that we got cot and gast.

PS. whoever shall find this I hope you share with others in the futur.

### **Discussion**

This first Journal entry was made following the students' attendance at the Diary of Anne Frank play in Vancouver. The assignment was to imagine that you are hiding with Anne Frank, or that you are a friend of Daniel ( a Jewish boy whom they had read about). The students were asked to imagine what it would look like, sound like, and smell like to be in hiding, or to go to a concentration camp. How would they feel? What would they think about their lives? What would happen on a day to day basis?

This initial Journal entry is underdeveloped, and lacks many of the features of the more able students' writing. Aside from the problems with the surface features such as the spelling errors and lack of sentence fluency, the student has not drawn on many of his imaginative tools. There is no description of how the hiding place looks, nor is there much description of how it sounds except for the tripping of the son. In fact, there are no really powerful images here at all. Nor is there any attempt to use metaphor, unless one counts the "trip" the parents take, but this is probably meant as a literal description by the student. There is some sense of cause and effect, but little ability to consider alternatives or imagine other

possibilities. None of the characters is developed, and the narrator shares only a few, fragmented feelings. There is little interior monologue, and the thoughts of the narrator are rarely connected to any external events. On the other hand, there is some attempt to use binary opposites, such as the contrast between the sadness the narrator feels versus the attempt by the neighbours to cheer him up, and the implicit contrast between the silence of their hiding place and the echoing sound of the son's tripping. We do see some sense of cause and effect here, although it is limited and not fully described. The student does not attempt to weave facts into the text, such as naming other characters, giving dates drawn from history, or place names. Aside from signing the text "Billy", the narrator shows little capacity to imagine being another individual. The final PS shows some attempt to manipulate time, as the text now becomes a kind of historical document that others may view, showing a sense of audience. Overall this is fairly typical of average grade 6 writing, and shows little imaginative engagement with the topic.

### **Student A's Second Text, Nov. 15th**

\_\_\_\_\_ I am a soldier and this is my story. It is may 30, 1944, and general Eisenhower is getting us redy for D-Day. We have 500300 ships in the attack and paratroopers are leaving five days befor us. We are now on the ships and we are thirty seconds away and I fere that we will not see are familys agin because we can feel death creeping down are backs. When we were runing on the baech whith the bolets zooming past are heads. More than half of us were dead and the people how survived regret knot help the people how were ingerd that we ran past and we hope that the rest in peace. On the axis side, Rommel was loosing his armies because we allied soldiers fight for hope, love, peace and fredom. Whith the love of are familys we won the war and and restord peace and love to germany and

brang glory to Canada and we gave the power and strength to the U.S. because we are a peaceful country. And we will not give it up just because of a war.

### **Discussion**

The assignment here was for the students to imagine what it might have been like to have been involved in the first day of the D Day invasion. They had watched a documentary video on this subject, and I had told them a number of stories from my father's recollection of what it had been like for the soldiers to land at Juno beach. I had them imagine the scene in their minds before they wrote by having them close their eyes while I described a scene for them, and had them fill in the details. They were given 20 minutes to write, but they demanded more time after the 20 minutes were up. Most students wrote for over a half-hour on this topic.

Here we see some clear growth from the first entry. This Journal is more extensive than the first, and has many more factual details woven into the text (even though some of those details, such as the number of ships, are incorrect). The sense of time is more mature here, with the student reporting the events as he is imagining them in his consciousness, rather than from a more disengaged perspective as he had in the first journal. The feelings evoked by the events are more closely tied to what the student is imagining as well, rather than simply being reported. For example, the student writes that he fears that he will not see his family again because he can feel "death creeping down his back". For the first time he has used a fairly interesting and powerful metaphor to describe his feelings, particularly through his personification of death "creeping". He describes the bullets "zooming" past their heads, using some sound imagery to develop the description. He also introduces an interesting ethical note when he mentions how he and the others feel having to pass the bodies of their fallen comrades on the beach. The writer uses the word "because" twice, indicating a more sophisticated sense of cause and effect than he had had in his first entry, where he had only one

mention of causality. There is a very clear binary opposite being utilized here as well, when he compares the victory of the allied troops over the axis because the allies were fighting for a moral purpose of peace and freedom. The piece ends with an historical overview, summarizing the results of the war and casting the conclusion in a moral light as being the consequence of the allies ethical purpose. There is also an interesting contrast with the role of the United States, who are seen as fighting for glory while the Canadians fought for peace and freedom. Apparently Canada allowed the United States to take the glory for the war because we are not willing to surrender our role as a peaceful nation just because of our involvement in the war. This is actually a very sophisticated notion, and one worthy of more debate. It also demonstrates the beginnings of idealism on the part of the student, and the capacity for critical thought regarding the actions of nations. This story seems to lead beyond itself into much more adult themes, and those themes seem to be woven, implicitly, throughout the piece. In just two weeks, although the surface features of the text are not much improved, this student has developed a narrative that has the seeds of promise. There is clear evidence of personal reflection and ethical engagement here, as well as some indication that the student is beginning to develop a few of the cognitive tools.

**Student B, First Entry, Nov. 1st**

I was daniel's best friend. I was playing at his house when 7 nazis bursted in. They smelled like gunpowder. They gave us one minute to gather some possessions. I could not grab any so I have nothing to remember my parents by. They took us away in a train that smelled like cow pies. I was so sad, I wondered how are my parents doing. Then the train stopped and the nazis then put us on a truck. It didn't smell any better. The ride was gruiliing and bumpy. Then the truck

door flew open with streams of bright light. I thought this was liberation. I inhaled the fresh soothing air into my lungs. All of us had hope until the nazis came in a separate us from the girls. I was just me, daniel and his father left. I later found out that danile's mom and sister were gassed. I tried to cheer daniel up but nothing helped. We spent guiling days waiting and waiting. When liberation day came I was never so happy in my life. We were so happy that we forgot about our cuts and bruises. When the Canadians came they treated our injuries. We went back home. The sun was shining and the air was nice and fresh. I will never forget those days with daniel's mom and sister, and working to the bone. I live with daniel in a normal lfie with no more nazis. Most of all is, we are free.

### **Discussion**

For a first entry, this is quite extended and sophisticated, although there is no attempt to integrate the facts surrounding the Holocaust into the narrative. This student has a clearly established sense of time, reflecting on the events, at the end, from a future time frame. The choice of similes is also interesting: the Nazis are described as smelling "like gunpowder," perhaps a very apt choice, while the train that the narrator is transported in smells "like cow pies." There is some interior monologue which reveals thoughts and feelings. This student's descriptions make reference to sight, sound and smell. Interestingly, he mentions the light and smell at the beginning of the narrative, then contrasts/compares these sensory details with the light and smell at the end using a very powerful binary opposite to make a point about the nature of freedom. He is also able to discuss his feelings as the events unfold, one of the most poignant details being the fact that he could not gather anything to remember his parents by when captured. One of the strongest features here is the student's ability to reflect on his own feelings as the character. His concern with cheering up his friend Daniel also demonstrates the emerging of an ethical response. His final reflection that they are free shows, I think, this

student's sense of revolt and idealism, a sense that seems to permeate the entire piece.

**Student B, Second text, Nov. 24th**

My name is Paul Tibbits and I am 10,000 feet in the air carrying the atomic bomb called "fat Man". I am driving the Eniola Gay or B29 superfortress bomber. There are eleven passengers that will help me drop the bomb. I am wondering why I am going to drop death itself. All those innocent people are going to be screaming for their lives by one push of a button. Without realizing I pushed the horrid button. I thought I was imagining the deathly screams but I was not imagining, I was hearing the screams. The explosion pierced my mind like hot knife through butter. I then remembered I have friends that are Japanese. I never noticed the tears coming down my cheeks. The mushroom cloud engulfed everything in sight. I have cursed myself for what I did and will never forget it. The memory will stay in the back of my mind, haunting me, forever.

**Discussion**

Although this entry is shorter than the first one produced by the student, it is in many ways more sophisticated. This is the student's fourth Journal entry. This student has managed to weave a number of historical facts into the text, taking the role of Paul Tibbits, the man who dropped the first atomic bomb. Interestingly, although this student had not read any biographical information on Tibbits, he reproduces here what Tibbits later reported about his own feelings about dropping the bomb. Once again the student has demonstrated the ability to manipulate the time frame of the story, beginning with the pilot flying over the city, and ending with reflection years later. The imagery here is not as powerful as it might be, and is mostly restricted to describing the sound of people screaming, and the bomb

engulfing everything. He does use one simile, the sounds of the screams piercing his mind "like a hot knife through butter." This student seems more concerned with the moral implications of what his character has done than the details of the setting. The student's use of the metaphor "dropping death itself" I find very powerful. He shows his capacity to identify with the innocent victims of the dropping of the bomb, and makes a connection through imagining that he has Japanese friends. Once again, the sense of revolt and idealism is evident in the student's work.

### **Student C's First Entry, Nov. 1st (Aboriginal Student)**

I'm hiding from the Nazi's right now the food is ok but not so good. It looks like a deserted place because there's dirt everywhere I feel like I'm in jail. And it is really different because it is like moving also but your hiding. There some moments where it is happy I'm just so happy to be with my family but most of the time it is sad. Because lots of bomb would go off you would here gun's go off to. But if I'm with my family I would feel really safe.

### **Discussion**

This is written by a young man who is considered by the classroom teacher to be several grades behind the other students in most of his skills. This initial entry, although underdeveloped, shows some promise. There are some implicit binary opposites, such as the contrast between the feelings of sadness at his need to hide versus his happiness to be with his family. The emotional range is not extensive, but the student does seem to make connections between the events around him and his feelings. There is some imagery, but the description of the setting is not well developed. There is little sense of cause and effect. Although there is only one simile, it is appropriate. This student clearly wished to engage in the activity, but

was not able to employ his imagination deeply enough to develop an extended or detailed narrative.

### **Student C's Second Entry, December 6th**

right now iam in Poland walking around but it is hard oh look there is a box wonder what's in it. i was saying to my friend should we grab it then we did. we went back to our place we said look we got some food that should a last last us a year my family was cheering so loud they almost lost there voice. Then i was wondering how much we should eat a day if we should help out our neighbors but then i thought no just my family. a couple months later some of our neighbours were dieing of starvation while we were still celebrating whith all the food that we got i really wanted to help the neighbors but then again i wanted to help my family at the same time because i cared about my family maybe we should of thought about grabbing that box because i didn't know it would bring me threw so much stress. I mean it just a box but its what my family wanted then a couple days later the Nazi government were looking for a box full of food me and my family didn't say anything. So then me and my family kept on going to the place were we found the box and we ended up saving alot of jewish families but then one day the german soldier came and found 15 emty boxs that had food in and the german soldier went up to my family and said you gise are in big troble! when all the germans here about this stay right here they came back and told us no more stealing boxs of food and if we kept on taking boxs they said they would kill us.

### **Discussion**

This is the student's third attempt to write a narrative based on an imaginative scenario that we discussed in the classroom: what are the problems that you would face if you were a family that had food during the Holocaust?

Should you share it or keep it for yourself? Here I was focusing on the use of hypothesis as a means of developing moral engagement with issues. Not only is this entry far longer than his first, but it shows far more complex interior monologue. There is some attempt at dialogue, although it remains essentially focused on the feelings and thoughts of the narrator. The sense of time is far more complex here as well, as the narrator considers what the future implications of his actions might be, and shows regret later about what he has done in not helping his neighbours. Cause and effect are much more evident, and the overall piece is far better organized in that it has a definite beginning, middle, and end. The ending even demonstrates a sense that there is some kind of moral order, for the good deeds of the narrator in helping many Jewish families go unpunished by the Nazis. This resolution to the ethical dilemma which underlies the text is preceded, however, by a great deal of ambiguity on the narrator's part: what ought he to do in this situation? The resolution is given as a matter of fact, without much accompanying reason: apparently he will do the right thing just because it is the right thing to do. Here there is an obvious moral binary opposite informing his handling of the situation, but it remains largely unconscious on his part, informing his work without ever becoming overt in the text.

I will be returning to a final discussion of these Journal entries and what they have to tell us about narrative development in the summary and conclusion. There is one last voice to hear from, however.

#### **7.6.7: The Voice of the Teacher**

An important part of this study was the incorporation of the perspective of the regular classroom teacher, a woman with many years of experience whose approach to education has always been rather imaginative. At the end of the

second study I asked her to write her observations and feelings as a response to her experiences over the year, based on some general questions. What follows is her verbatim response.

### **The Class**

This is a Grade 6 class of 24 children. The male/female split is approximately 50/50. There is a group of boys that are highly competitive and a few girls that are buying into this by occasionally going the extra mile. The class consists of a range of ability levels, including one severely autistic child with a full-time Teacher's Assistant. There are 5 children on Individual Educational programs (IEP's), two of which are First Nations students. Of the six First Nations students in the class, two are achieving at or above the acceptable standards, two are struggling to meet the minimum, and two are on IEPs, which means they are at least two to three years below grade level.

This is a class of kind and caring students. They are flexible and willing to "go with the flow". There are no behaviour/attitude problems and they have a strong sense of themselves as leaders in the school. They, generally speaking, need very clear directions and a lot of support the first time they do something. The competition among the boys tends to have a positive and a negative edge. On the positive side, they will absolutely meet all criteria for an "A", however, on the negative side, there is not a lot of "risk-taking" in terms of "individual" interpretation of any given assignment, and not much evidence of "creative genius"!

(This) school is a very small school, serving about 135 students. These students come from Columbia Valley, Sleepy Hollow Trailer Park, Soolwalie Reserve, and the community of Cultus lake itself. Although there are families at the high end of the socioeconomic scale, a larger percentage are at the lower end of the scale. The PAC runs a breakfast program that serves approximately 30

students each morning, and the First Nation's Teaching Assistant runs a lunch program for the First Nations children.

Teaching this group has been the best experience in my teaching career, a career that ended in December when I became a District Counselor. The class has handled the transition better than I did! They are now well settled with a new teacher and we get to see each other once a week when I come to work at Cultus. They are always happy to see me, and I them. My feeling about this class, from the bottom of my heart, is that if the world could be run by them, it would be a wonderful place to hang out!

**Have I used Imagination in my class prior to my experiences with Rod?**

I chuckle to myself as I ponder this question, because my immediate response is "Well of course I have. Doesn't everybody?" Upon deeper consideration, perhaps everybody doesn't! Personally, I am constantly looking for unique and creative ways to engage children in their learning. Because I am keenly aware of my own creative abilities (and limitations), my natural inclination is to encourage the children to use their imaginations in a variety of ways. This may take form in an expression of art, drama, music, poetry, movement, dance, or creative writing, but it is certainly not limited to those forms. I have often used story telling as a way to introduce a topic of study. Role playing has also been an important method to help children understand the concept of "empathy", "time warps", "victims vs. bullies" etc.

As I move through a unit of study, I often involve the children in a variety of activities that require the stimulation of their imaginations. My experiences have shown, over and over, that by doing so, the children stand a better chance of having new concepts and ideas planted firmly in their memory. Their questions and discussions are deeper and more sensitive to the issues being considered.

**Has my view of using Imagination changed over this period of time?**

I cannot honestly say that my view of using the imagination has changed significantly over the past year, other than having my view reaffirmed in spades! I have always held the belief that “if you can imagine doing it, than you can do it”. . . and to my class I say, “Therein lay the advent of all the advances made in science, technology and medicine. Someone, somewhere, could imagine”. . . let us not leave out the wheel!

**Will this experience influence my future classroom practices?**

Because this a Grade 6 class and the curriculum tends to be “broad” rather than “deep”, it was very interesting for me to see the class’ response to a topic that was taken very “deep”. Rod did a tremendous amount of research on the various aspects of the Holocaust, and there is no doubt in my mind that he could have easily continued another six months. I was quite surprised that he was able to sustain their interest for so long. I don’t have time, ordinarily, to focus intently on one topic . . . simply because the curriculum demands that I move on! I think the interest was sustained, primarily, because of his personal enthusiasm for the topic, the stories he was able to tell, and his natural ability to involve the students in using their imagination. To some degree this will influence my future practice in that I will make a personal commitment to deeper and more meaningful research on specific topics; to the point where I can make the stories real and “mine”. . . becoming an expert is another way of putting it!

**Can imaginative methods be used to meet curricular goals in both content and skill areas?**

In my opinion this is not only possible but a desirable, and for many teachers, perhaps a preferred way to meet the curricular goals. I see that imagination can be easily applied to Science, Math, the acquisition of a second language, Personal Planning, Physical Education, and, as we have aptly demonstrated, all strands of a Language Arts and Socials program. Including imagination as a means of engagement and a strategy for learning is not a new concept. The only limitations on the use of imagination, in any given classroom, in any given subject, are those which the teacher puts upon himself/herself.

**What do I want other teachers to know about using the imagination in the classroom?**

It would be a great error on my part to assume that other teachers don't use or encourage the use of imagination in their classrooms. I am not necessarily referring to binary opposites, although this is very powerful, rather imagination that allows the child to fully engage all of the senses. My sense is that if teachers aren't engaging children by using imagination as one of their primary strategies . . . then they are just not having any FUN! This will be a teacher that has somehow bowed to the pressure of the yearly report put out by the Fraser Institute and who is now only focusing on test scores. I would really want teachers to remember that learning can be a great adventure for children . . . and to me, adventures are always fun!

**What kind of relationship with students does Imaginative Education require? . . . Foster?**

I honestly do not think it is important to have any kind of preexisting relationship with the children, unless your total focus in teaching was to be about Family Life Education and Puberty! If that were the case, then yes, you need to build a relationship of safety and trust.

Rod, you came into my classroom and were immediately welcomed by the class. They were not given a lot of information about what we were to be doing. You did not know them, and they did not know you. Imaginative education is by no means a threat to the child's safety, sense of self worth, or self esteem. In my view, and I could be wrong, imaginative education is a great way to build a positive relationship with a class based on welcoming the unique parts of each individual, and to encourage risk-taking, in what the class has come to see as a safe environment. This fosters a positive relationship with oneself and with others. It is a WIN-WIN!

### **7.7: Summary and Research Conclusions**

Have the questions that I posed at the beginning of this chapter, indeed, at the beginning of this thesis, been answered? Based on my own observations over a year, the response of the students to surveys, the results of the various assessment instruments, both quantitative and qualitative, and the comments of the classroom teacher, I can certainly draw some tentative conclusions.

It seems clear to me that students can be drawn into very active engagement with the curriculum through the use of even a few of the techniques of imaginative education. In particular, they always seem to be interested in any material that is presented in story form. The use of imagery accompanying these

stories has even greater appeal, whether in the form of actual pictures, or through strong verbal description. Even the use of overhead transparencies giving only sketchy images seems to help many students process information. This may be due to differences in learning style, of course, but it remains true that all students seem to enjoy having a visual image upon which to “hang” their understanding. More research could be done here examining which types of images might be most effective for which age groups, and how those images could best be combined with narration to provide students with the most engaging combination of the oral and the visual.

The use of simile and metaphor has also proven to be highly effective, not only for helping to make various points clear ( a technique that almost all classroom teachers use naturally as a means of explanation), but in making connections to more abstract ideas and themes. How is Hitler like a bully in a school yard? How were the first settlers to North America like people who move into your home as guests and then take it over? Not only do metaphors and similes help students make connections between otherwise abstract ideas, but they also provide a valuable means of generating images aiding description and emotional connection. Perhaps every unit plan ought to include a space for teachers and students to generate metaphoric comparisons not only at the beginning, but throughout the unit. A combination of imagery and metaphor, of course, lays the groundwork for the use of story.

Stories that appeal the most seem to be those with a strong human interest aspect. Egan’s notion of “heroic elements” provides a very useful frame for considering what it is about stories that makes them interesting for all of us, not just students. Making the connection between the real heroes of history and the heroic elements which they embody is a bit more problematic, however, as it requires a move into more abstraction. Focusing on concrete examples, and then helping

students to draw more general conclusions, seems to be the most useful way of approaching this issue. Focusing on human conflict and the resolution of ethical problems not only provokes a great deal of interest, but can lead to the kinds of “deep” conversations that research on literacy often points to as being most meaningful for students. One of my main questions for this study was whether students could be drawn towards a more Philosophic type of understanding through the use of stories with an ethical aspect. Stories which are also structured around binary opposites -- the clash between good and evil, the inherent ambiguity of moral dilemma -- are also deeply engaging, and lead to better responses from the students, both orally and in writing, than might otherwise be possible. One overarching element here is the notion of revolt and idealism. Once students begin to respond emotionally to ethical issues embodied in story form, they can be led to having a response that makes a personal connection with otherwise disembodied, abstract ideas.

Other kinds of strategies which Egan does not address directly, but which seem implicit in his work, such as role play, prediction, and questioning, are also highly valuable in developing engagement. These techniques seem to develop fairly easily from looking for the emotionally engaging aspects of the topic being studied, as well as the sense of mystery and wonder that students possess. A great deal of research could be focused here on how best to develop students' capacity for wonder and their sense of mystery, attitudes which seem to have all but vanished by the time many students reach the high school level. Perhaps if more curriculum could be taught using imaginative education, students might display these attitudes more readily. At grade six, however, each of these strategies embodying cognitive tools proved useful in creating engagement, leading to a variety of outcomes and products.

My general conclusion here, supported by both studies, is that even students as young as grade six can be engaged for long periods of time through a combination of imaginative techniques. As the classroom teacher has suggested, these techniques are simply more “fun” than most regular classroom practices. Furthermore, these techniques are not only more engaging than most regular practices, but also seem to lend themselves very naturally to the development of literacy.

Another important aspect of this research has been the question of how Aboriginal students are able to respond to the use of imaginative education as a teaching tool in the classroom. Here the results look very promising, as Aboriginal students show little difference from the “mainstream” students in their degree of engagement with the curriculum material. Their responses on surveys show that they appreciate these techniques to the same degree as the “regular” students, and seem to develop their literacy skills to a greater degree as well. The hypothesis that Aboriginal students would respond favourably to the use of the tools of orality involved in the Mythic type of understanding seems to have been borne out to a large degree. My overall feeling, however, is that imaginative education, while providing a very valuable addition to the techniques and strategies of the regular classroom teacher, is not in itself sufficient to deal with all of the problems facing our Aboriginal students. There are many more issues involved in making education accessible for our First Nations youth than any one approach can address, I suspect. Given that caveat, however, imaginative education seems to hold out great promise as being an essential aspect of any overall strategy dealing with this issue.

When it comes to Egan's notion of the literate eye, i.e., the focusing on various cognitive tools of emerging literacy, we move from the focus on engagement to the question of the type of literacy that imaginative education

seems to produce. In the first study, I attempted to address the issue of whether the techniques of imaginative education could lead to demonstrable growth in literacy as it is usually defined on standardized tests. The results seem to be very promising, at least as measured by the C.T.B.S., and this helps to make the case that there will not need to be a sacrifice on the part of teachers who decide to utilize imaginative education in place of other classroom practices, a concern that I have raised already. Furthermore, it also seems fairly easy to combine these types of strategies with regular classroom practices and outcomes. In the first study, I focused on critical thinking skills, and attempted to integrate imaginative and critical approaches to the curriculum. In this study, the classroom teacher once again brought in her interest in art, but managed to combine her language arts unit with my focus on history, to the benefit of both, in her view. I have also discussed the fact that we managed to achieve most of the IRP goals for history, and in fact seem to have exceeded the expectations for grade six, as many of the outcomes which I attempted to incorporate were in fact meant for higher grade levels. It seems that imaginative strategies can be very useful in meeting regular literacy outcomes, both in language arts as well as social studies.

So far, my contribution to the research on imaginative education has been to confirm that students' engagement is heightened by the use of these techniques, that cognitive tools can be turned into useful classroom strategies, that imaginative education can be successfully integrated with other types of classroom practices, that Aboriginal students can also benefit from these techniques, and that there is no inherent problem in reaching imaginative outcomes alongside those of the regular IRP. But as I have suggested, there is another aspect to the question of developing literacy, and that is to ask what kinds of literacy a focus on cognitive tools produces.

When it comes to investigating the nature of narration as a cognitive tool for both teaching and assessment, and the manner in which it can be combined with other cognitive tools, I feel that I have made my major contribution to the research. The rubric I developed and used for both studies points to a notion of literacy that is more in keeping with Egan's theory of education as I explained it in chapter four, and one that goes well beyond how narration is conceived of in elementary classrooms in general. Although narration is often used to teach students, and is used as a vehicle for developing student writing abilities, I can find no evidence that cognitive tools, and their impact on the imaginations of students, form any part of usual assessment practices. If education is really about the accumulation of the cognitive tools of our culture, then our view of literacy must be expanded beyond the simplistic notion that it is merely the ability to "read and write," for this definition begs the central question of what exactly is entailed in those capacities. It is for this reason that my study has focused on the specific qualities of narrative that could be connected to the cognitive tools that Egan describes: the use of metaphor and simile, imagery, emotional connection, and binary opposites, for example, as essential elements in meaning-making. I have also attempted to demonstrate that developing students' sense of time as an element in narration, as well as their capacity to utilize interior monologue and connect it to their senses and emotions, can play an important role in scaffolding their imaginative response to what they are learning. As I have attempted to demonstrate, students seem to be able to incorporate these tools into their writing with success, even in the short span of time that I had to work with them. Much more research, however, needs to be focused on the extent to which students could develop these cognitive tools more broadly and deeply in all parts of their curriculum. My research here opens the door for a much more extensive examination of this topic, and its potential benefits for all students. In particular, I am interested in the way in which students' ethical

connection to the humanized events of history seems to be a possible achievement, even with students as young as grade 6, using their imaginations. As I realized as this research project unfolded, the emotional and ethical connection to the events of history made possible through an imaginative approach is perhaps the greatest benefit to students, one that in and of itself makes this methodology worthwhile.

### **7.8: Final Thoughts**

In the introduction to this thesis, I began by pointing out that in spite of the successes that many classroom teachers manage to achieve, we often feel as if we are failing our students, as there always seems to be something left undone, some level of understanding which remains unrealized. We see that failure etched in the faces of our students as they leave our classes every day, a feeling on their part that, very often, they are being denied something that education perennially promises, but seldom delivers. As I also pointed out, we find ourselves faced with a number of challenges in terms of the changes to our conception of what it means to be a literate individual. There also seems to be growing public concern over the capacity of the public education system to address the growing demands of an increasingly more complex technological society. Further, it is not clear that in spite of some of its successes, the present education system is able to meet the expectations of all students, particularly those with a First Nations background. On all sides, we seem beset by intractable issues and concerns. Egan's point is that we are failing, at least in part, because we have not freed ourselves from previously held notions of the purpose of education. He argues that until we are able to offer a curriculum based on our historical legacy of cognitive tools, tools which offer the promise of developing a more engaging and in many ways more

valuable educational experience for children, we will not and cannot be successful. In this thesis I have attempted to shed some light on the extent to which Egan's ideas can be applied to a regular classroom setting. The results, as I have outlined them, seem to support his argument, and to offer real hope for the future. But as I have said, my interests do not stop there.

If we are to open the Doors to Dreamland, to slightly modify Northrop Frye's memorable term, we can best begin by asking the kinds of questions that imaginative education allows us to pose about the purpose and nature of education itself. If the development of literacy has changed the nature of consciousness, and if that consciousness can be seen to have developed historically with the accumulation of cognitive tools, then the question that offers itself is how we see this process playing itself out over time. Is ironic consciousness, or type of understanding, the end of this process, or are there other types yet to be developed? What part can educators play in this ongoing story? In the end, what is the purpose of education, and what does it mean to be an educated individual? These questions are at the heart of curriculum theory, of course, and perhaps there are no final, definitive answers, but only a series of more nuanced, tentative possibilities. But as I have tried to argue in this thesis, any attempt to seriously address these questions must take into account the history of Western culture, and that culture has been wrestling with the role of the imagination in our understanding of the world from the very beginning. We seem to be the kind of creatures for whom an imaginative engagement with the world is essential for any meaning making. In a sense, the imagination is central to our "writing of ourselves into being" as individuals; narrative is part of who we are in a very deep way. My own interest is in the issue of how education can become a force for the liberation of human beings. That freedom, from my perspective, goes beyond merely economic or

political forms of liberation, but must extend to even deeper epistemological, and ontological forms. Sartre has commented that:

We may conclude that imagination is not an empirical and superadded power of consciousness; it is the whole of consciousness as it realizes its freedom. Every concrete, real situation of consciousness in the world is big with imagination in so far as it always presents itself as a withdrawing from the real (quoted in Kearney, 1988, p. 236).

This notion of the self as autonomous has recently been contested, of course, by postmodern notions of identity formation, and it would be a mistake not to recognize that we “write ourselves into being” in a social context, one fraught with conflicting meanings. Nevertheless, the power of the imagination, and of literacy, is surely to give us a voice in how we are written, in spite of the power of culture to influence the text. And as educators, we can best facilitate that process by giving our students both the power and the opportunity to speak with their own voices. In this research, I have not only begun to investigate how an approach to education based on cognitive tools can do more than satisfy our desire for literacy, but also how it can begin to offer possibilities for profound human change. At the present time we stand only at the threshold to Dreamland, keys in our hands. Only further research based on these ideas, but also grounded in the reality of classroom practice, will be able to provide the insights and methods which we need to open the Doors to Dreamland, and step across the threshold.

**APPENDIX #1**  
**PILOT STUDY**  
**LESSON PLAN FOR UNIT ON CANADIAN HISTORY**

**BIG IDEA:**

The study of history is important for a number of reasons: as well as helping the individual understand how he or she came to be located in the circumstances of the present, it helps us identify how historical consciousness differs from mythic understanding, and allows us to begin to realize that although we may have been shaped by historical circumstance, it is also the case that as individuals we can shape the circumstances of history. In this unit, students will learn how their identity as Canadians has been shaped by our history, a history that must include an understanding of the Aboriginal Peoples and their contributions, as well as the historical issues that remain unresolved.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

**Knowledge:** By the end of the unit students will be able to demonstrate a knowledge and an understanding of

- the history of Canada from the earliest times, including an understanding of the role played by the Aboriginal people in helping in the exploration of Canada by the Europeans.
- the Aboriginal peoples creation myths and stories.
- the science behind the dating of archeological finds pertaining to the Aboriginal settling of Canada.
- the technology used by Aboriginal people and how they existed in their environment.
- where the different Aboriginal peoples lived in Canada.
- the earliest explorers from Europe, including the Vikings.
- The technology used by early explorers in sailing to North America
- the impact of the contact between the Europeans and the Aboriginal peoples, including both positive and negative effects on both peoples.
- some of the current issues for Aboriginal People arising from the historical contact

between the Aboriginals and Europeans

- the contributions made by Aboriginal people to the culture and history of Canada

**Skills:** By the end of the unit, students will have developed and/or extended their ability to

- read text at their grade level outlining the history of Canada
- research using the library and the internet to find material supporting their interests in this area
- write Diary entries from the perspective of a number of historical figures
- compare and contrast the myths of their own origins to those of the Aboriginal People
- write paragraphs responding critically to issues that arise during the unit
- use abstract binary opposites to organize ideas in their writing
- use lists and categories to organize ideas from their research
- develop their writing using images and metaphors
- create images in their artwork which support their understanding of their reading
- communicate their ideas to their classmates in a variety of forms
- cooperate with their classmates in developing and extending their understanding

**Assessment:**

A variety of assessment tools will be employed to measure student achievement, such as

- standardized test of knowledge, such as fill in the blank or short answer quizzes
- short paragraph answers assessed for both style and content, including the use of metaphor and imagery
- Diary entries assessed for their depth of thought and engagement, and the development of story line.

- timelines assessed for their detail and accuracy
- lists and categorizations assessed for the quality of organization

### **KEY IMAGES/METAPHORS**

The central metaphors/images for this unit will be the Jade Canoe, a work by Bill Reid, and the River, an important symbol for the Stolo people. The canoe stands as a metaphor for travel, for adventure and exploration. The people/animals in the canoe show us that we are together on this journey, that the world is composed of diverse peoples who must cooperate if they are to be successful on the voyage. Our identities as individuals are meaningful only in the context of diversity. From this perspective, the canoe is an ecological metaphor showing the interdependence of all things, along with their uniqueness. The River is a metaphor for change, for travel and exploration, for the flow of life and the movement from one place to another, and the diversity that we experience as we explore the world.

### **KEY WORDS**

Journey, adventure, travel, cooperation, exploration, change, identity, progress, life, diversity

### **BINARY OPPOSITES**

Cooperation vs competition; adventure vs security; change vs stability; familiar vs the new ; diversity vs sameness; individuality vs conformity

## APPENDIX #2

### ~~Follow Up Study 2~~

### ~~Unit Plan: World War II and The Holocaust~~

In this unit, I shall be employing a number of cognitive tools drawn from both the oral/mythic level as well as the more literate/Romantic level.

#### **Big Idea**

The study of the Holocaust presents an opportunity for students to learn a great deal about history, and about human nature. Here they can encounter ideas about racism, stereotyping, and discrimination that can enhance their understanding of many current issues.

#### **MYTHIC/ROMANTIC PROCESSES**

##### **1. ~~Sense of Wonder/Emotional Engagement~~**

What does it mean to have a sense of wonder about the Holocaust? Is it more a sense of horror? Or can we see something to make us wonder here, such as how the Jewish people managed to maintain their sense of humanity in the face of the Nazi oppression? Can we see signs of hope for the human condition, however faint, in the response of people like Wahlenberg? Emotional engagement is perhaps easier, in that the students' sense of outrage at injustice ought to be evoked by the behaviour of the Nazis towards the Jews. Perhaps this sense of outrage can be generalized to other situations, such as the treatment of African Americans, or the treatment of Aboriginal Canadians. This could lead to some important insights and debates about how we ought to treat others in general.

##### **2. ~~Identifying Heroic Qualities~~**

**Main heroic quality:** courage of the Jewish people in the face of Nazi oppression.

**Alternatives:** Courage of those who strove to help Jews in the face of Nazi threats.

##### **3. Story Form**

###### **a). Binary Opposites**

**Main Opposition:**

**Oppression by the Nazis versus desire for freedom by the Jews**

**Inhumanity of the Nazis versus the humanity of the Jews**

**Irony of Nazis believing they were the “superior” race versus the barbaric actions they took.**

**b). Images and Drama**

Image of the concentration camps and the ovens versus the Jews playing music for their guards. Images of Nazi soldiers in black boots versus Jewish children in rags at the barbed wire fences. Violence of war against rest of Europe and violence perpetrated against people inside Germany-- not just Jewish people suffered.

**c). Story Form****Beginning:**

Conditions caused by First World War, Depression led to unrest in Germany. Rise of Hitler based on people’s anger and despair. Formation of Third Reich and beginning of attacks on Jewish people, civil rights, and freedoms. Beginning of war against the rest of Europe, deportation of Jews to death camps.

**Complication:**

Jewish struggle against imprisonment. Defense of the ghettos. Dutch and others hiding Jewish neighbours. Danish king with yellow star. Resistance fighters.

**Resolution:**

Defeat of the Nazis. Release of concentration camp victims. Formation of Israel. Partitioning of Berlin. Beginning of Cold war.

**d). Humanizing Content**

Examine the story of one child as he or she struggles against Nazi oppression, such as Anne Frank or Hannah. How does that child show courage in the face of death?

**4. Pursuing details**

Throughout the unit, students will go to the net and search for information on aspects of the story in which they are interested, such as maps showing how the war unfolded, or where the concentration camps were located.

### **5. Conclusion**

What does it mean to be a human being? What do we learn from the behaviour of the Nazis? From the behaviour of those who sheltered the Jews? From the Resistance fighters? How does this apply to our treatment of the people in Japanese interment camps in B.C.? The treatment of African Americans?

### **6. Student demonstration of understanding**

Students can write diary entries which tell the personal stories of people in concentration camps, and read them to the class. They could do more investigation and give us more information about the Holocaust. They could produce a short drama presentation in small groups about people being taken to the camps. They could tell us about a book they read about the Holocaust or the Second World War. They could debate whether we still discriminate against people, and if so, why. They could try to show the parallels throughout history between the majority and various marginalized groups of people. While the unit is progressing, they can be asked to write diary entries from the perspective of various historical figures, famous or not.

APPENDIX #3

**INDICATORS OF CLASS ENGAGEMENT: Process Rubric**

A. Most students show sustained involvement in the learning activities set by the teacher, accompanied by a positive emotional tone including enthusiasm, curiosity, and interest.

LOW		MEDIUM		HIGH
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10

B. Most students select tasks at the border of their competencies, initiate action when given an opportunity, and exert intense effort and concentration in implementing learning tasks.

SELDOM		SOMETIMES		OFTEN
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10

C. Most students are able to use cognitive, metacognitive and self-regulatory strategies while involved in a task.

SELDOM		SOMETIMES		OFTEN
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10

D. Most students ask questions relevant to the topic, and respond positively to questions when asked. Students engage in classroom discussion on topic.

SELDOM		SOMETIMES		OFTEN
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10

**SAMPLE CLASS EVERY 5 MINUTES FOR A PERIOD OF 20 SECONDS FOR ALL FOUR SCALES.**

**SAMPLES**

**TOTALS**

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>
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**ENGAGEMENT RUBRIC: Product**

**Student Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Assignment** \_\_\_\_\_

**INDICATORS OF INDIVIDUAL ENGAGEMENT**

/60

**A.** The student's work is of the required length, and is done within the appropriate time limit.

1-2

3-4

5-6

7-8

9-10

**B.** The student's work is on topic, and shows a full understanding of the task demands.

1-2

3-4

5-6

7-8

9-10

**C.** The student's work shows higher cognitive functions such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

1-4

5-8

9-12

13-16

17-20

**D.** The student's work indicates emotional involvement in the task.

1-4

5-8

9-12

13-16

17-20

Comments:

## APPENDIX #4

## STUDENT SURVEY

First Nations? Y N

Boy Girl

1. Do you usually like school? What is your favorite part about school?

2. What is your least favorite part of school?

3. Do you sometimes find school boring? Why do you think that is?

4. What part of our unit on the history of Canada did you like the most?

a. videos

b. timelines

c. diary entries

d. notes

Why?

What part did you enjoy the least?

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**Why?**

**5. Compared to the way in which you usually learn things in school, how would you rate the use of imagination as a learning method? Rank this method of learning on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is terrible and 10 is great, and 5 is the usual method of learning.**

**1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10**

**6. What did you learn by writing the stories on various parts of the unit? Did you learn more about history? Did you learn more about writing? Be as specific as you can be.**

**7. Did you like imagining that you were different characters throughout history? Was it easy for you or difficult?**

**8. Did it get easier to write the stories as you went along?**

**9. Would you like to do this kind of learning in other parts of the curriculum, such as science or math?**

**10. Do you think that you have developed your imagination as a result of studying history this way?**

**11. Do you have any comments that you'd like to make about your experience in learning Canadian history over the past five months?**

**APPENDIX #5  
NARRATIVE RUBRIC**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment # \_\_\_\_\_

/6

**6 EXCELLENT: ENGAGING, THOUGHTFUL, WELL-DEVELOPED**

The entry is sustained and continuous. It often uses similes and metaphors effectively to develop setting and or description. Descriptive language uses sensory elements to create effective imagery. Imagery is vivid and relates to the feelings of the writer. There is a well-developed sense of personal reflection. Interior monologue often shows evidence of connection between thoughts, feelings, and values. There is often a sense of the manipulation of time as part of chronological structure. Character is fully developed. Dialogue is often used effectively to develop story line. Hypotheses are clearly woven into the text. Rhetorical devices are often used for effect. Cause and effect are clear and effectively used to explain events. Factual information is often woven into the text. The narrative engages issues of values, and attitudes towards ethical issues on a very thoughtful level.

**5 VERY GOOD: INTERESTING, INTELLIGENT, SUSTAINED**

The entry is fairly sustained and continuous. It uses similes and metaphors effectively to develop setting and or description. Descriptive language often uses sensory elements to create effective imagery. Imagery is often vivid and relates to the feelings of the writer. There is a sense of personal reflection. Interior monologue shows evidence of connection between thoughts, feelings, and values. There is a sense of the manipulation of time as part of chronological structure. Character is well developed. Dialogue is used effectively to develop story line. Hypotheses are often woven into the text. Rhetorical devices are used for effect. Cause and effect are clear and used to explain events. Factual information is woven into the text. The narrative engages issues of values, and attitudes towards ethical issues in an intelligent way.

**4 ABOVE AVERAGE: UNDERSTANDABLE, CLEAR, COMPLETE**

The entry is somewhat sustained and continuous. It sometimes uses similes and metaphors to develop setting and or description. Descriptive language sometimes uses sensory elements to create effective imagery. Imagery is sometimes vivid and relates to the feelings of the writer. There is some sense of personal reflection. Interior monologue shows some evidence of connection between thoughts, feelings, and values. There is some sense of the manipulation of time as part of chronological structure. Character is fairly well developed. Dialogue is sometimes used to develop story line. Some hypotheses are made.

Rhetorical devices are sometimes used for effect. Cause and effect are sometimes clear and used to explain events. Factual information is sometimes woven into the narrative text. The narrative engages issues of values, and attitudes towards ethical issues.

### **3 AVERAGE: ACCEPTABLE, STANDARD, FAIRLY COMPLETE**

The entry is of adequate length. A few similes and metaphors are used to develop setting and or description. Some sensory elements are used to create imagery. Imagery is sometimes vivid and relates to the feelings of the writer. There is some sense of personal reflection. Interior monologue shows some evidence of connection between thoughts, feelings, and values. There is some sense of the manipulation of time as part of chronological structure. There is a sense of emerging character in the narrator. Dialogue is sometimes used to develop story line. A few hypotheses are made. Rhetorical devices are sometimes used for effect. Cause and effect are sometimes clear and used to explain events. Factual information is sometimes woven into the narrative text. The narrative sometimes engages issues of values, and attitudes towards ethical issues.

### **2 WEAK: NOT YET AT ACCEPTABLE STANDARD, UNDERDEVELOPED**

The entry is not of adequate length. Very few similes and metaphors are used to develop setting and or description. Few sensory elements are used to create imagery. Imagery is seldom vivid and rarely relates to the feelings of the writer. There is little sense of personal reflection. There is little sense of the manipulation of time as part of chronological structure. Character is essentially undeveloped. There is little interior monologue. Dialogue is rarely used to develop story line. Very few hypotheses are made. Rhetorical devices are rarely used for effect. Cause and effect are rarely clear and used to explain events. Factual information is rarely woven into the narrative text. The narrative rarely engages issues of values, and attitudes towards ethical issues.

### **1 POOR: WELL BELOW ACCEPTABLE STANDARD, VERY UNDERDEVELOPED**

The entry is too short. No similes and metaphors are used to develop setting and or description. No sensory elements are used to create imagery. Imagery is never vivid and never relates to the feelings of the writer. There is no sense of personal reflection. There is no sense of the manipulation of time as part of chronological structure. Character is not developed. There is no interior monologue. Dialogue is never used to develop story line. No hypotheses are

made. Rhetorical devices are never used for effect. Cause and effect are never clear and used to explain events. Factual information is never woven into the narrative text. The narrative never engages issues of values, or attitudes towards ethical issues.

**COMMENTS:**

**APPENDIX #6  
FINAL EXAM**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of this exam is to find out whether you have understood what you have been learning for the past five months about the history of Canada. Using your notes and diary entries as a guide, choose the three most important events in Canadian history, and explain why each event was so important. You will be marked based on the quality of your explanations, not on whether you have chosen the "correct" three events. Make sure that you explain each event fully, and give reasons why it is so important, as if you were in a debate.

1.

Event: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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/10

2.

Event: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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