Patterns Perceptible:

*Awakening to community*

by

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ABSTRACT

Patterns Perceptible:
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This paper interweaves narrativized readings and experiential narratives as personal and cultural resources for counterhegemonic cultural critique within our historical context of globalization and ecological crisis. Framed by perspectives on epistemology, everyday life, and place, these reflections seek to engage and revitalize our notions of community, creativity, and the individual, towards visioning the human art of community as a counternarrative to globalization. Such a task involves confronting the meanings we have come to ascribe to work and economy which so deeply determine our social fabric. Encountering the thought of key 19th and 20th century social theorists ranging from William Morris, Gregory Bateson, and Raymond Williams, to Murray Bookchin, Martin Buber, and Wendell Berry, these reflections mark the indivisible web of culture in the face of our insistent divisions, and further, iterate our innate creativity as the source for a vital, sustainable culture that might reflect, in Bateson’s terms, the pattern that connects.
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For my daughter Hannah, and my grandchildren to be

with worlds of love,

and faith in Worlds of Love to come...
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There are ideas, and ways of thinking, that have seeds of life in them, and there are others, perhaps deep in our minds, with the seeds of a general death. Our measure of success in recognizing these kinds, and in naming them making possible their common recognition, may be literally the measure of our future.

Raymond Williams, 1958, cited in Eagleton, 1989

Everything is off its chain...everything. Scott Merritt, The Detour Home, 2001, MCA Records
INTRODUCTION

This thesis begins from a life-long yearning and sense of bereftness for a wisdom culture that seems to have eluded us, whether or not, when or where, it has ever truly existed in various forms. At some point it became clear to me that everything I had imagined I would write about was a palimpsest, gradually being worked down to what was really there beneath, wanting to be said.

I always knew the what that I wanted to speak about – they had been concerns all my life: issues of work, community, ecology, how we live as humans and sustain ourselves, the whole notion of a wisdom culture over and against the inequality, oppression, and deprivation many experience around the world under the effects of a capitalism. Equally urgent for me was the sense of dismay at a culture in many ways bled, over generations, of substance, vitality and creativity by its subjection to an abstracted and dehumanized notion of economy, and at our pervasive consumer culture (of which we in the West are a product).

Further, these matters needed to be considered within the current historical context of what we call globalization and the exigencies of the ecological crisis we face as a result of the impositions of such ways of life. I felt at the outset, a commitment to determine my own categories of thought and study, in sensing phenomenologically in to the questions, what do I make of this world, my place in it? With what formal elements and philosophies can we image and weave a sustainable culture? There was the need too, to write from a space that acknowledges the particular positions and states from which any of us address such concerns. Likewise I knew the how – that I needed to speak about these matters in and from a voice that is everyday, a language that my grandchildren could read and glean something useful from one day. I write for them (for when they exist) and for all who are concerned about how we might live. For some years I have been concerned to place myself historically within this culture which I experience as so bewildering. I wanted to speak both from within and outside our conditioned frameworks of self and self-understanding, attempting to address in the round so to speak, the questions we face of cultural well-being and sustainability. It is through iterating the larger processes, formal patterns and interrelationships with which we are all continuous, that we can begin to conceive practical possibilities towards a democratic and humane social formation.

I am writing socially from both a privileged and a challenged place. I am writing personally from a place of, by turn, and throughout my life: a sensation of shock, bewilderment, and yearning. This paper is not an argument but an utterance, concerned with the food of words, passion and intelligence among humans and what we can learn when those three forces come together. It is first and foremost an act of communication
(I hope), not least with myself. I have attempted to open up a dialogical link between, on the one hand, personal experience and responsibility, and on the other, the realm of ideas and possibility, to enact meaningful reflection on cultural processes. I have attempted to speak from the emergent space between these realms. For me, such an undertaking has meant confronting a lifelong sense of divide, to reconcile my engagement with the psychological (key in my life for several reasons) with more deeply addressing my concerns with the communal, which of course is not separate or alongside the psychological, but which contains it. I have approached this by means of reading several works and scanning countless others, by thinkers whom over the years I have ‘found’ and found resonance with, and whom I consider visionary in their human and historically-grounded responses to our human problems concerning how we might live well and wisely. They are thinkers who for me somehow embody living ideas that connect and which extend outward in all directions. When I read them, there is a quickening in mind, body, and heart, an exchange of being and knowing. I experience them as communicating not to only an inner circle of disciplinary specialists, but human to human. These are thinkers who have known varying levels of popularity or obscurity. I have woven their insights into this paper in the form of narrativized readings, honouring their thought and writings as valuable cultural artefacts and ongoing resources for analysis of core elements of culture. Conversely my task has been to retrace the discourses through which we know and engage with the cultural (the palimpsest I constructed, the categorical and theoretical, those thinkers I have read), back to the concrete and experiential. The two dimensions, lived and mediated experience, are often split in education, in general discourse, and in cultural representations. They have often been split in my own life, the former acting as a defense against the latter. I have attempted to mark and address this divide (as both inevitability and challenge) by weaving experiential narratives into the paper, which both stand on their own and reflect experience relating to the cultural dimensions under discussion. I see such an effort as iterating an approach to, in Raymond Williams term, a cultural structure of feeling, that is, the ‘gap between experience and the discursive’ (Winter, 2010), or what one could call in other terms, story.

Multiple layers of mirroring are affected by linking these two streams, the experiential and the theoretical: the individual and the collective; the existential with the everyday; the psychological and social-cultural; one theory or academic discipline to another; and the partial mirroring of many social realms and processes back to each other and to their common creative root; as well as thesis and life. The implications of such an attempt are to reconcile the indivisible ‘disciplines’ of the humanities and the social sciences as one; to recover the common source of experience and idea as the creative sources of culture; and to re-situate learning and knowing as integral with healing, cultural production, and transformation. The sensation of cultural ‘autism’ across which I write – that is, the sense of disconnect between experience,
the language to express it, and the language and forms reflected by my culture – while possessing its individual determinations, I consider also to echo Benjamin’s collective notion of the silence of modernity, further described below in the section on the theory of everyday life (Highmore, 2002). Thus, I am also, as a crucial aspect of countering hegemonic influences, seeking a language and form to express contemporary experience as I encounter it: As reality changes, representation must change (Highmore quoting Brecht, 22).

The main `edifice’ that collapsed for me along the way was any notion of trying to change the world, and the related idea of striving to become a citizen in any ideal sense. This is not to say that this work is not wholly concerned and hopeful in these directions. My hope is that its sense making, expressive, and integrating aims act in dialogue with similar journeys by others, and highlight the need for us to actively value and share them towards revisioning culture. We and our ideas and perspectives are constantly changing. Rather than being about changing the world, amidst my own (albeit real) lifelong yearnings to dwell as a citizen (whatever that might be) within a wisdom culture (whatever that might be), the paper evokes images of what could be, rather than what should be; it mediates between critique and visioning. It has arrived appropriately at being primarily a work of meaning-making, just as its content is concerned with culture as shared meaning-making. It reflects pattern within and without, in space and in time. We cannot separate our personal processes from their cultural matrix. In drawing on personal experience, we ideally other ourselves, or willingly meet the other in ourselves, where it truly resides. I have wanted to register creatively what I have read, learned, and experienced, and how it has altered and inspired me: the art of understanding really, and how it can work to move us into the otherwise. I mean for any efforts here to stand as an iteration of the fundamentally emergent and creative nature of social life. I also have experienced the learning involved as an apprenticeship and wish to pass on these cultural resources which I feel have been neglected and un- or under-used. Finally, the thesis became what it always was trying to be: a path of discovery; a door through which its truth spoke to and changed me. It was the only thesis possible, or true, for me (Palmer, 1993). Fittingly then, it begins with a kind of knowing, moves through learning, and ends as an unsettled and liminal space.

The narrativized readings here consider and critique our notions of culture, community, the individual, and their interrelations, towards revitalizing the meanings of community for human well-being. They further confront the meanings our culture has ascribed to work and to the notion of economy on which it is founded, in marking their harmful social and ecological effects. These reflections are first framed within perspectives of Bateson’s pattern that connects, the theory of everyday life, the notion of place, and the
contemporary context of globalization and ecological crisis. Analysis of hegemonic influences catalyzes questioning of what it is we wish for as a human community/s. I suggest that globalization as it impacts and intersects with our meanings of community, work, and place, might be dialectically leading us towards a renewal of community as necessity. Our environmental crisis in itself compels us to face, at some point or other, possibly within our lifetimes, what Bateson (1972) considers to be the fundamental error of our epistemologies.

The thinkers I encounter here write of these realms in ways that transcend academic disciplines and consider the totality of culture while incorporating perspectives that range from sociological to anthropological. Their ideas can be read together as a dialogic synthesis of human energies towards new imaginings of vital culture. British scientist Gregory Bateson (1972, 2002[1979], 1987) weaves a comprehensive mosaic of *the pattern that connects* which underlies all life processes, both biologically and socially, undercutting the dominant rationalist view with recognition of the metaphorical nature of reality and drawing attention to the epistemological errors that are the basis of our ecological crisis. Raymond Williams (1961, 1973, 1989) was a British historian and cultural theorist who, like many featured here, penetrated institutional and disciplinary boundaries to reflect on the patterns and creativity of culture and social life in Britain through the 20th century and historically, depicting the impacts of what he called the *long revolution*. He opened out understanding of culture as constituted by the entirety of the lived social fabric. Martin Buber (1992, 2002), a Jewish sociologist in the early and mid-20th century, was a scholar whose far-reaching work depicts an analogous poetics of intersubjective and communal life. Murray Bookchin’s (1992, 1995, 2007) notion of municipal communalism affects an alter image of how Buber’s communities might play out. It is structurally determined, highly discursive, and imposes a polemical directive for how we should govern ourselves. D. W. Winnicott (1988, 2002) was a British paediatrician in the mid-20th century, whose work on the child and the family yielded a poetics or prototype of human care from the start of life, from which so much of the pattern of our social development derives. William Morris (1890[2003]) was a British writer and artist who evolved from being a famous craftsman to an active socialist with a passionate vision for recovering creativity and well-being within our notions of work and all of social life. Wendell Berry (2002) is an American poet, essayist and activist who speaks eloquently for recovering humane work and economy based in agrarianism.

In parallel, the interwoven experiential narratives affect several aims of the paper: they illuminate the multiplicity of ways that these dimensions of culture can play out and mean for the individual; they in turn often mirror through the particularities and manifoldness of everyday life, how futile are the divisions we
maintain in our approaches to administering society; they evoke the connections and disconnections, the
gaps, fragmentations and geographies between, that can prevail between the individual and the collective,
between our ideals and the living, everyday facts of our cultural experience; they iterate story and
narrative as fundamental to personal identity and cultural formation; they iterate the way our individual
lives join up to create emergent culture. Through both narrative streams and the connections they iterate,
we gain a sense of how we are subject to hegemonic forces and how we might respond.

METHODOLOGY

In a paper of this nature, content and methodology, or mythology, are indivisibly interwoven. I have
chosen the selective study, observation, description, reflection, and, ultimately the story-ing, that I do here,
as a mode of scholarship and cultural visioning. Highmore (2002) notes that *the job of description can
be the necessary prerequisite for allowing new forms of 'political' critique to emerge* (28). He points out
that second-wave feminism in the 60s and 70s was a driving force not because of some abstract notion of
‘equality’ and ‘liberty’ but because of the empirical work of bringing women’s lives into discourse with
the slogan, *the personal is political*, thereby provoking a transformation of politics itself to include the
domestic and sexual. Similarly, in his study into the nature of places, Walter (1988) sought the inspiration
of the original meaning of *theoria*, a complex but organic mode of active observation ...a holistic practice
of thoughtful awareness that engaged all the senses and feelings (18). Thus, phenomenological reflection
in this paper on areas of cultural experience seeks to return philosophical and existential concerns to
everyday life. Such approaches in our thinking, writing, and action, can catalyze broad participation in
working to revitalize culture.

Joining up with my earlier studies in humanities, it is *story* that I continue to be concerned with here.
Muriel Ruckeyser wrote that the world is made not of atoms, but of stories. Conversely, ideas and theories
are stories, though many have forgotten this. For Bateson (1972), story is a form of thought. Both at the
level of organisms and at the metalevel, *a pattern that connects us is the way that all mind (not just
human) share the fact of thinking in stories* (which he defines as knots or complexes of
connectedness/context/relevance) (13). This extends to internal stories as well as stories projected out into
‘action.’ So both the embryology of the sea anemone (its formal/spatial relations) as well as its
evolutionary process (temporal relations) would be the ‘stuff of stories’ (Bateson, 2000). When my
daughter attended a Waldorf school as a child, I learned the moral and psychological value their
educational approach attributes to storytelling of the old fairytales, starting at the kindergarten level. I
have been preoccupied since that time with the notion of story and the histories, techniques and cultural
significance of storytelling. Later I learned of Walter Benjamin’s (1968 [1936] essay *The Storyteller*, and eventually years after that, encountered the essay. The essay spoke worlds to me about communication, about the loss of our ability to communicate experience, and, along with the work of other writers, about the primary significance of narrative for culture at all levels (e.g. Kearney, 2002). It essay became a focal point for an intuited sense of loss of a key personal and cultural source and resource. These concerns found their way into my undergraduate thesis through its focus on a writer who reflects the presence of the storyteller and through an approach to literary theory that emphasizes the direct use of and engagement with, and response to, literature and story (MacLeod, 2000; Eagleton, 1996). I carry this concern forward here at every level: in iterating story as fundamental to self-identity and to culture, in focusing on discovering stories and ideas, not information, through the writers I encounter here, and in encompassing our life narratives as constitutive of culture.

**Narrativized readings**

My selective study of particular thinkers iterates several related methodological concerns. The act of learning through these visionary thinkers for me is to affirm learning through relationship. For me these thinkers share in common that they are innately teachers by the way that their experience, ideas, and their capacity and passion to communicate fully-formed visions and insights, are a single unity of presence. They are in a deep sense, storytellers, whose profound historical sense and cultural visions fully grasp and speak to the totality of life and convey a poetics of culture. Through their encompassing voices, we can feel into the underlying forms and patterns of cultures which, which remain invisible to such a degree, yet make us what we are. My attempt in this thesis to find a rightful language and form for its subject means responding to these thinkers in a way that registers and communicate the poetry I experience through these writings. To connect passionately to ideas is to register the eros which I feel belongs to genuine learning. It is not my purpose here to systematically describe the contributions of these writers but to narrativize my readings of them, in a sense, to tell their stories again, as all great stories must be told and told again. It is to allow them to be used in a kind of ethnography of ideas and, further, to encourage readers towards their works. All of these thinkers I have ‘found’ over several years, one calling to another.

There are strong links among them, through their concern with core cultural questions and values: how should we live and work, how might we govern ourselves, and what meanings do we live by? I find many of these writers to be themselves connected by Bateson’s *pattern that connects* (1972). They are linked through the holistic, ex-disciplinary, passionately humanistic and sometimes normative perspectives with which they embrace their cultural preoccupations. I mean to bring them together based on these linkages
and the range of concrete approaches and tensions they exemplify rather than through any strictly historical approach or formal theoretical classification of their ideas. Buber writes of the community of communities, and Berry talks of a pattern of patterns, as Bateson does. Raymond Williams observes the *structure of feeling as a shared set of ways of thinking and feeling demonstrating regular patterns*... (Horak & Seidl, 2010, 9). Christopher Alexander (1977) shared his architectural studies and insights in the book *A Pattern Language*. Many of these thinkers were writing in the 70s, witness to a historical moment when patterns were profoundly changing. There are also tensions among them. Buber and Berry espouse religious perspectives on community, while Bateson forwards a grounded sense of the sacred, and Morris and Bookchin are adamantly secular.

I justify the selection of these writers whose thought tends to the holistic, by the rationale of direct bodily experience. That is, common experience shows that proper care of ourselves as embodied beings demands a holistic approach and ethic of care, and thus the same applies to the larger organism that is community and culture. Further, in incorporating these thinkers, I note the value of looking to such holistic, visionary thinkers to inspire us as we work at culture in the smallest and largest ways, both inside and outside academia. It is not accidental that many of these thinkers have existed or acted against the grain of what I observe to be the academic mainstream. Many of them were ignored in their milieu or largely snubbed precisely because of their externality to single disciplines, or else an acceptable version of their ideas was given its token place (Higgins, 2010). This pattern seems endemic among thinkers who do not operate within disciplinary boundaries.

John Berger (2001[1970]) writes of William Benjamin:

> During his lifetime his work reached a very small public and every ‘school’ of thought – such as might have encouraged and promoted him – treated him as an unreliable eclectic. He was a man whose originality precluded his reaching whatever was defined by his contemporaries as achievement. He was treated, except by a few personal friends, as a failure. Photographs show the face of a man rendered slow and heavy by the burden of his own existence, a burden made almost overwhelming by the rapid instantaneous brilliance of his scarcely controllable insights. (187)

In a collection intended to contribute to coming to terms with the work of Henri Lefebvre, one of the most influential social theorists of the 20th century, some of whose vast range of work extending from 1924-1992 still remains to be translated from the French or published, Elden and Lebas (2003) write:
To portray him as a philosopher, a sociologist, a historian or a political activist would not only fail to do him justice, in terms of the range of topics he discussed, inspired or indeed initiated, but would also allude to a disciplinary categorization which he vigorously repudiated. (Elden and Lebas (2003), xii)

In a similar vein, I note the question of why I found few women among this group. Either there are considerably less women who write or engage with these concerns, or else they are not as visibly registered in the academic canon available. I cannot analyze or answer this concern here, but want to note that I am keenly aware of the gendered nature of many of these writings, mitigated largely by their social context in time and place. To this end, I note that in nearly all instances of the writings of Raymond Williams or Martin Buber, I have changed references to ‘he’ to ‘he or she’. But further there is the matter of how the reception and currency of texts is extensively shaped by how they are mediated through the literary, publishing and academic worlds that condition them, especially after the death of the writer. Elden and Lebas (2003) describe such a convergence of influences on the experience of Lefebvre’s work:

The outcome has tended to be a projected and largely male English-speaking discourse that can tell us almost as much about the crisis underlying the masculine appropriation of ideas and British and American academic identity, as it can about Lefebvre’s thought itself. This may of course also be related to the disciplines which English publication of the second wave of translations have addressed themselves to – urban geography, planning and architecture – disciplines not abundantly furnished with female practitioners and scholars. (xv)

This is also ironic as the editors, intending for a more critical and heterodox reading of Lefebvre, are concerned to show that for Lefebvre, women were not only the objects of love and struggle...but ultimately, the subjects of revolution. For Lefebvre, the future was feminine (xv). This supports my sense that as women, we may be more reluctant to write on these subjects or to approach such writers and that our engagement with such texts may indeed be deeply shaped by such masculine appropriation of ideas.

The work of Donna Haraway (2004) offers an alternate and vital example of a woman’s engagement with cultural discourses.

Likewise, there seem many unacknowledged debts to these thinkers. I have been surprised in many of my readings that seem indebted for some strands of their thinking to for instance, Gregory Bateson, yet he is not mentioned (e.g. Palmer, Giddens). Bateson seems to me to have been as dis (re)membered as
Raymond Williams. Are some of these thinkers so foundational (even if maverick) that they are just taken for granted, a given, or are their ideas so circulated as common currency among some circles that their origin has been absorbed and disappeared? In the study of literature there is always the canon, whether authors are attributed to it for good reason or not. Could there not be such a canon of foundational, root social theorists and ideas? In another direction, why is such a useful and concrete book as *Political Ecology Global and Local*, published out of York University (Keil, et al., 1998), not front and centre, especially fourteen years later when few of its reflections and insights seem to have had impact? Why did only one writer I encountered among so many books on cultural realms, make reference to architect Christopher Alexander, who visioned an entire practical, ‘pattern language’ of the art of building and construction for engendering humane and beneficient places, spanning the smallest details of rooms to the configuration of communities?

In our contemporary educational institutions, academia seems analogous to the wider market economy, where, in this case, it is a glut of ideas and theories that compete and vie for dominance of circulation. Our separation of disciplines reflects the false separations of our many realms of life. The glut of ideas and theories does not, as far as I can tell, enrich our culture or everyday life. A vital culture might rest rather on more widespread learning and reflection upon fewer thinkers and writers arising from diverse places and voices that seek humane cultures. Likewise, I see the selection of some thinkers over others as inevitable, iterating the fact that in all aspects of life we are always selecting, always editing or practically needing to limit. It is our intention and transparency in doing so that determines meaning, value and power relations (Eagleton, 1996 [1983]).

Extending my points above on how we access and use such writings, I note many of these thinkers can be challenging to read and understand, notwithstanding the gendered influences that can affect the reception of such texts as mentioned above. Elden and Lebas (2003) describe Lefebvre’s prose as: *...a peculiar mixture of neologisms, semantic rigour and plays on words, written in a very disjointed way, with elliptical comments, asides, digressions and inelegancies* (xvi). I suggest still that all of us need to have access to such works and be willing to grapple with them and gain the *structure of feeling* in them. This thesis encompasses such an effort. I emphasize the fact of effort over achievement; it is often the very fact of my distance from these experiences, places, histories and expertises that impassion me to be exposed to them. If I cannot speak out of them with any personal authority, I at least mean to gain from the measureless teaching, inspiration and feeling they offer. To refuse such an opportunity would be equivalent in my mind to not bothering to look at a painting or any other image, to refusing to listen to or
read a story, because we felt we could not read or understand or like it. What we call understanding occurs at many and subtle levels. There can be many determinants in our willingness to engage in such efforts or to desist, but they should rest solely on our own impulses rather than on any dictates of our educational institutions. The point is to claim the right to partake of these ideas, to educate ourselves within such a community of thought, whether or not we are academics. This would seem essential for these writers whose discourse is so often outside official academic disciplines and can thus be lost to us as the cultural resources they are. Indeed, if their ideas had achieved more currency we would perhaps be living in a different society. Moreover, I suggest that a refusal of engagement with such writings and cultural questions is that same refusal or abandonment of human depth that many believe to be characteristic of our culture (e.g. Lefebvre, 1966).

Put another way, the effort in this reading has been as much labour as pleasure. The slow absorption, word by word, has been a kind of practice or discipline, a commitment to honouring these thinkers and their works. If it is difficult to grasp all of their meanings, I could at least devote the time to touching each word as I went with mind and eye. Mary Catherine Bateson (2004) discusses the distinction between learning and education, and the way that ‘lifelong learning’ has become a mantra in our time with many women returning to the classroom as adults in a world that is changing so rapidly. She reminds us that medieval universities only gradually emerged from being monastic institutions and how the ongoing study of sacred texts is in many traditions celebrated as the highest form of learning. She conceives learning as vocation and as spiritual practice. I have both needed and chosen then, to approach and register these readings as the stories and representations that they are, to make my own meanings with them. Like all literature (as science, philosophy and religion together were once described) they are texts, signifiers that are both one with, and exist separately from, their signified (Tarnas, 1991). They are one and all, stories that have entered me, that have helped me to unlearn shapes that were fixed in my mind. Benjamin (1968[1936]) wrote that the storyteller is a man (sic) who has counsel for his readers. Every story he says, contains something useful, whether moral, practical advice, or maxim. However, he tells us, our ability to exchange experiences is decreasing and devalued in modernity, especially after the First World War and the advent of communication as information (88). The secular forces of history have gradually removed narrative from the realm of living speech, with the loss of storytelling as an artisan form of communication (Benjamin 87). He cites Valery’s observation of the passing of the atmosphere of craftsmanship from which storytelling derives: Modern man no longer works at what cannot be abbreviated (93). I am advocating then, that we open ourselves to reading and receiving such ideas and theories in a direct, listening way, in the way that Benjamin illuminated the receiving of stories, absorbing word and image in
the way that *precludes psychological analysis* (Benjamin, 1968[1936]), 91). In this way, *we learn where we can*, to paraphrase Williams (1989 [1958], 5) and, after de Certeau (1984), we resist hegemonic influences; we make *tactical* use of the materials around us.

I also wish to acknowledge any seeming absence of thinkers beyond this group which emerges from our western world, or any comment on cultures outside our western world. This fact reflects the reality that I was socialized and live in western culture and am at present concerned with responding to the crises of culture and values that I observe in it, and with learning from the bodies of thought that have emerged in this sphere, in particular those which, like the ones discussed here, I believe to have broad humanist implications. Moreover, I feel with many of us that it is our western sphere and influence that is largely responsible for the global crises we face. I do not feel authorized to speak for other cultures, whatever their similarities and dissimilarities to our own, though I suggest and hope these discussions have broad relevance for all human communities. Further to this point, it is clearly social forms, processes and relationships that I am concerned with here more than content. I simply want to note that my choices do not reflect deliberate omission of any group, experience, or body of thought, and I fully acknowledge their limitations.

**Experiential narratives**

My use of non-fiction narratives, beyond contributing to many thematic aims as stated above, joins up with long-germinating impulses to articulate a position in culture, to speak across and exorcise a lifelong sensation of creative, cultural and historical ‘autism’ or disconnect. It marks the place of narrative in personal and cultural life, and is an extension of my concerns with writing and *use* (Eagleton, 1996; Kearney, 2002). Further, it affirms the value of our experience as the basis for theoretical practice (hooks, 2009; Seidl & Horak, 2010). As Williams (1961) articulates (see Part Two), culture is iterated through description and communication. Just as the realm of everyday life mirrors the interrelation of all areas of life, this is reflected by the interweaving of experiential narratives with the narrativized readings, each of the two streams blending inflections of the other: theories as stories that are collective compasses; experiential, ‘everyday’ narratives that mirror our relation with theoretical realms. The use of experiential accounts also reflects my valuation of documentary in culture and of *everydaging* our archives (Highmore, 2002). For example, some of the place narratives giving accounts of alternate cultures and subcultures can illuminate how communities and cultures can exert widely varying forces for stasis or vitality.
Structure

Part One establishes the perspectives or lenses which ground this inquiry and frame my concerns. They are an account of Bateson’s *pattern that connects*, an account of *Everyday Life* theory, notes on our experience of place, and some notes on the historical context of globalization. Bateson’s *pattern that connects* seeks to reconcile the ontological and epistemological, articulating the metaphorical nature of reality, the crucial place of *story*, and tracing the epistemological errors that have led to our ecological crisis. The *theory of Everyday Life* draws attention to the nature of our everyday experience in modernity, in order to emphasize the way vast areas of experience and possibility are remaindered by the prevailing models of work and economy examined here. The everyday is where all dimensions meld, are lived, and where problematic divisions imposed by social institutions are exposed. My use of this theory further acts to affirm our ordinary, *everyday* powers of observation and reflection as sources and sites for counterhegemonic engagement and cultural transformation. *Notes on Place* discusses perspectives on place as the intrinsic context in which we dwell and work, drawing attention to the way that our environment materially reflects our cultural values. Place is where we always are located as a total sensory experience, intimately bound with meanings of community and with the experience of everyday life. *Placing Globalization* counters prevailing narratives around globalization to propose it as a process that may be ultimately repatterning our social formations to catalyze new forms of community. These frameworks are the ground for their suggestive and layered threads of articulation or implication to unfold across the paper.

Part Two consists of reflections on our notions and processes of culture, community, creativity, and the individual. What has creativity come to mean? What exactly is community? How have we derived our understanding of individuality? How do hegemonic influences shape our lives? An account of contemporary concerns in social life draws out the central presence of the body and how creative and healing modalities that attend to it, including a grasp of child development, might recover the lost art of care as the very substance of culture. In revitalizing our engagement with these terms, meanings and processes, and our sense of how culture happens, we can better clarify our visions for cultural transformation. What might community, necessarily reconceived, mean for human well-being as we move through the dynamics of globalization?

Part Three proceeds from these inquiries to reflect on how we sustain ourselves as human communities, confronting the meanings we have evolved to ascribe to the categories of work and economy in modernity, which have brought in their wake enormous social and ecological consequences. What is ‘work’ apart
from the creation, care and sustenance of the progressive systems of life: food, home, community, and world? Our life is a work; our home is a work; the day is a work. A concept such as, for instance, political ecology, can be seen then as simply the task of sustain/ability in our historical moment, because we have neglected that intrinsic part of our work. What is ‘economy’ apart from all of the above? Health is a distorted notion when divided off, for what more is it than an outcome of the sustainable balance of all dimensions of life, or else absent when there is imbalance? The implications of our operative models of work and economy, consumerism and our unmet need for beauty are unravelled to gain a sense of what might constitute the contours of constructive human communities.

These realms are intrinsically connected, one always moving towards the other, all partially mirroring each other and ever reflecting Bateson’s pattern of patterns. The concluding section, Towards Community, draws a number of implications of these reflections for counterhegemonic discourse, for how we might live, and how we might live with what is. Interweaving the two narrative streams elaborated above demands its own form of representation. The experiential narratives, where they appear, come at the end of the relevant section, Part One, Two or Three and after the Conclusion. The style that best describes these narratives might be, to use Kathleen C. Stewart’s (1996) helpful phrase, *not a master narrative ...but as a collection of fits and starts...made up of narrativized moments of encounter, shock, description, digression, and lyrical, ruminative aporias that give pause* (119). These ‘stories’ vary in length from a few lines to several paragraphs. In light of these methodological features, the paper is formally closer to a work of creative nonfiction, sharing the spirit of bricolage. It inscribes knowledge as artefact (Bateson, 1972), while speaking outside academic conventions and approaches which are not my language. This thesis represents *nondisciplinary* work, rather than disciplinary or even interdisciplinary work (Rodman, 2010).
Thesis as Life

Materials and Mechanics

The material tools and techniques of this project have been as vital and rich as all the other aspects, such as the transporting of endless books to and from the library, scanning, prioritizing, storing and ceaselessly arranging and rearranging them in a small space. There was also the dealing with computer crises along the way, the challenge of endless hours spent on my paid job eating up so many hours, especially in the final few months. Yet that too was somehow deeply fitting. It was necessity; it was survival. It was the grounding and satisfaction that I could earn the money I needed to live and to pay my tuition. It was somehow the very elongation of the thesis process that was intrinsic to its achievement – the time spent between, doing other things, during which ideas and understandings were forging their way into my cells and my soul. Finally, there has been the sheer physical agony of writing it: the intrinsic lack of mental flow and the need to continually get up and do physical things, mundane things, everyday things, for relief. Only the pure reading gave the experience of flow, and then also the flow from mind through fingers and computer keys as I wove personal narratives and throughout, somehow, the form emerging, and watching the print appear over the months. All this then, finally and deceivingly becomes the smooth surface of a written document. The experience has made me register even more deeply the constructed and selective nature of all academic, written documents, that is, it has eroded even further for me, the boundary between theory and ‘fiction.’

Halfway

It always comes like this, in fragments, when I’m doing the dishes, running to answer the phone for work, the next flash of insight or understanding, the next thing I want to say. Like my life, this thesis has been a continuous breaking and holding of infinite threads that as always, I hope and trust will join up, and hold together. For a year now, I have been trying to read from within what I need to say, what one might say in a master’s thesis in social science, but it turns out to be so much more about removing the edifice of what seems sayable, from theory to fiction and back again, about failing to master and about being okay with that.
This thesis is no more than a manifesto for the bleedin’ obvious.

But on I go. I am chopping wood, carrying water. Wood chopper, word chopper.

I’m doing what I hope will be the ‘good-enough’ thesis

At long last, during the writing of this thesis, at the age of 54, I got my driving license.

I watched my daughter graduate from university last summer in Bath, England.

Many creatures have accompanied me: A nest of mourning doves on my balcony last spring; A new cat that needed a home; The joy of bees in the bacopa in August; The incessant raucous music of the cicadas last summer; A queen dragonfly on my balcony in September, who stayed from afternoon until dark.

And the hot flashes and organismic altercations of menopause have so many hours made me ache to leap out of my skin. I think it is very hard for women to do this kind of work in menopause. My brain hurts so much of the time doing this work.
PART ONE – FOUR PERSPECTIVES

THE PATTERN THAT CONNECTS OR, A STORY OF EVERYTHING

Propero says, “We are such stuff as dreams are made on,” and surely he is right. But I sometimes think that dreams are only fragments of that stuff. It is as if the stuff of which we are made were totally transparent and therefore imperceptible and as if the only appearances of which we can be aware are cracks and planes of fracture in that transparent matrix. Dreams and percepts and stories are perhaps cracks and irregularities in the uniform and timeless matrix. Was this what Plotinus meant by an “invisible and unchanging beauty which pervades all things”? (Bateson, 2002, 13)

What is a story that it may connect the As and Bs, its parts? And is it true that the general fact that parts are connected in this way is at the very root of what it is to be alive? I offer you the notion of context, of pattern through time. (Bateson, 2002, 13)

The British anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1972) originally drawn to science, worked across several disciplines in the mid-20th century, to demonstrate painstakingly and perhaps idiosyncratically, the epistemological errors which he believed to have brought us to the crisis where we find ourselves, in failing to understand the environment as part of us. He suggested as early as 1972 while communicating these concerns that our greatest (ecological) need is to continue the (ecological) process of their propogation and that this was more important than the plans themselves... (505). He started this work in the 1970s (after decades of earlier scientific scholarship), writing several books that did not gain widespread popularity until they infiltrated popular consciousness during the humanistic movement of the 60s and his presence in such visible forums as the Esalen Institute in California in the 1980s. It seems a great social tragedy and statement of our times when we read in Mary Catherine Bateson’s new introduction (2000) to his book Steps to an Ecology of Mind about her father’s experience:

Until the publication of Steps, Gregory must have given the impression, even to his strongest admirers, of taking up and then abandoning a series of different disciplines; sometimes, indeed, he must have felt he had failed in discipline after discipline. Lacking a clear professional identity, he lacked a comfortable professional base and a secure income. He had also become an outsider in other ways. Having been deeply committed to the necessity of defeating Germany and its allies at the beginning of World War II, he had
become convinced of the dangers of good intentions. The efforts to oppose the pathologies of Nazism and Fascism, which grew out of the distortions of Versailles, had in turn created new pathologies that were played out in the McCarthy era and the Cold War, and continue into the 21st century. In his post-war work on psychiatry and interpersonal communication as well, he began to see that efforts to heal could themselves be pathogenic. His was, for many years, a lonely and discouraging journey, characterized by a distinctive way of thinking rather than a specific concrete subject matter. (Bateson, 2000, webpage)

It confounds intelligence that because Bateson did not fit in any disciplinary realm, he was left to lack a clear professional identity...and a secure income. Ironically here is another impact of the severe epistemological errors we continue to perpetrate in our compartmentalizations and commodification of knowledge.

Bateson (1972, 1979 [2002], 1987) was interested in the nature of order or pattern in the universe linking everything and in the accordant ecology of ideas. He realized the overriding importance of context and meaning in understanding anything. Bateson saw mere purposive rationality unaided by such phenomena as art, religion, dream and the like as pathogenic and destructive of life. Whereas, conventionally anthropologists would ask about art such things as what particular psychological themes it reveals, his thought was that if art has a positive function in maintaining wisdom, then the question becomes: what sorts of corrections in the direction of wisdom would be achieved by creating or viewing this work of art (1972, 147)? He applied his ideas on context and framing to the process of psychotherapy, inquiring whether certain pathologies are related to abnormalities in the handling of these frames and paradoxes and proposed the idea that psychotherapy is an attempt to change someone’s metacommunicative habits. He felt that if the paradoxes of play are an evolutionary step, then they are also in the change we call psychotherapy. He suggested that the resemblance between the process of therapy and the phenomenon of play is profound. But apart from psychotherapy, he felt that the paradoxes of abstraction are necessary, and without which the evolution of communication would be at an end. One of his most significant contributions was the doublebind theory in which he asserts that there is an experiential component (ie. how/what we learn and experience in early life) in the determination and etiology of schizophrenic symptoms and other related behavioural patterns such as humour, art, and poetry. He does not distinguish these realms but sees all as a genus of syndromes for which he coins the word ‘transcontextual’. He suggests that whether for transcontextual gifts or transcontextual confusions, there is in either always or
often a ‘double take.’ He believes there must also be a genetic component, but this can’t really be investigated until the environmental effect has been identified and can be controlled, so he is trying to do this.

Bateson wrote that adaptive change in biological organisms takes many forms (response, learning, ecological succession, biological evolution, cultural evolution, etc., depending on the size and complexity of the system) but always depends on feedback loops, whether provided by natural selection or individual reinforcement. That is, by superimposing and interconnecting many feedback loops, we solve problems and form habits to work with classes of problems. In short, we learn to learn (deutero-learning). He believes the propositions important in the determination of transcontextual syndromes are those formal abstractions which describe and determine interpersonal relationship, or in truth those messages which more accurately constitute the relationship. That is, there are no ‘things’ in the mind: dependency, hostility, love, and so on, are verbally coded descriptions of patterns immanent in the combination of exchanged messages. As Bateson (1972) puts it: We are so befuddled by language we cannot think straight, and it is convenient, sometimes, to remember that we are really mammals. The epistemology of the “heart” is that of any nonhuman mammal (275). This weaving of context and messages is the subject of so-called double bind theory (he illustrates it with Goethe’s syntax or grammar in the anatomy of flowering plants). He asserts that experienced breaches in the weave of contextual structure are in fact ‘double binds’ and act to promote transcontextual syndromes. He uses an account of porpoises and their ‘operant conditioning’ to illustrate two aspects of the genesis of a transcontextual syndrome: First, that severe pain and maladjustment can be induced by putting a mammal in the wrong regarding its rules for making sense of an important relationship with another mammal. And second, that if this pathology can be warded off or resisted, the total experience may promote creativity (278). Extending these ideas to inquiry on the reasons for alcoholism, he cites his belief in the natural history of the living human being where ontology and epistemology cannot be separated. Since there is no word to express this, he uses the term ‘epistemology’ in studying the alcoholic’s epistemology (and how this has been helped by cybernetics) and how he or she has adapted or maladapted to his/her environment. This especially concerns the process of how concepts of the ‘self’ are built.

Grof (1981) writes on Bateson’s contributions to psychiatry, psychology and psychotherapy:
If there is a core, a central point, to Gregory Bateson's contributions in these areas, it is a combination of a particular aspect of the theory of communications, which is called the theory of logical types, and the problems of human language and interaction. He returns to these issues again and again from different angles and on different levels. According to him, human speech is a very complex phenomenon with a long history that has left significant traces. It has many archaic elements and mythic features that make it a much better tool for an artist and poet than for a logician, scientist and philosopher. A particularly characteristic problem in human communication is the fact that in its course certain basic rules of logic are constantly being violated. (Grof, 1981, 4)

Grof further clarifies Bateson’s concerns regarding his conception of the doublebind leading to schizophrenic conditions:

In view of the critical importance of the quality of interpersonal relationships for satisfaction and security that one experiences as a human being, disturbances and breakdowns of meta-communication can have very serious consequences...Humans have developed the ability to communicate quite specifically about things. However, human language still contains the kinesic and paralinguistic elements from the earlier stages of evolution. While we are sending concrete and specific verbal messages, we are also defining through metacommunication what relationship we have or would like to have with the person involved. (8)

In the circumstances of such a breakdown, the child will be receiving two levels of messages: verbal messages affirming love and non-verbal metacommunication expressing negative aspects of the relationship. Since one set of messages denies the other, it is in principle impossible to decode the communication properly until and unless the individual is mature enough to master metacommunication. Neither can the child ‘leave the field’ as she must sustain trust of the parent.

Exploring these ideas for their ramifications at the level of world history and the question of what is important in the 20th century, Bateson (1972) cites Blake that he or she who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars (General good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite and flatterer) (469). The examples he chooses are Versailles and cybernetics developing during WWII, for in these
developments we can see how we as mammals care not about episodes, but about the patterns of our relationships, and this where it hurts us to be put in the wrong (Bateson, 1972, 470). He exemplifies such a fundamental change in systems by the deceit of the Germans by the Treaty of Versaille 1919, which led to WWII and to demoralization of the Germans. He saw it as a Greek tragedy that passes through several generations, where the sins of the fathers are visited on the children. He stresses how the young are most impacted by this craziness because they don’t know what it is about, whereas his generation at least saw it happen so they at least know it. He acknowledges that no doubt George Creel, intended ‘general good’ with his 14 points of the Treaty, but now we live in the midst of this corruption as normal.

In the case of cybernetics, an aggregate of communication theory, information theory and systems theory, this all relates to the nature of organized systems, as was the Versailles issue. One of its roots is The Theory of Logical Types (ie. the name is not the thing named; thus a message about war is not part of the war). He hoped cybernetics would contribute to a change, to help us see what we are doing ethically: it is not just a change in attitude, but a change in the very understanding of what an attitude is. He crucially notes that the very stance he is taking here – saying that the important things are the moments at which an attitude is determined/the bias of the thermostat is changed – is derived directly from cybernetics, shaped by events from 1946 and after. Bateson (1972) sees cybernetics as the biggest bite from the Tree of Knowledge in the last 2000 years. He believes that, though it has integrity within itself, we cannot trust it to keep us from sin. He cites the new (at that time) government use of Games Theory to determine international policy with all countries doing the same, that is, following the rules of the game, so rules become more and more rigid. It is the rules that have been operating since Versailles that need changing. Despite latent dangers, he sees latent in cybernetics the means of achieving a new and perhaps more human outlook... (477).

He notes that we continue to act as if mind is separate from nature and the body, the same thinking which leads to theories of control and power, and blaming and consequently jails and mental hospitals, or if we can’t identify a concern, then we can blame the ‘system’ (as youth were doing in the 60s) but it is all the same error. The myth of power is very powerful and self-validating but is still the epistemological error that leads to disaster, and our current environmental disaster. At a conference on mental health at this time, he said that their duty as therapists was to ‘achieve clarity in ourselves’ and then reinforce it in others. In The Roots of Ecological Crisis, a 1970 document in favour of an Ecology Bill submitted by University of Hawaii to State Senate, he cited three root causes: technological progress; population
increase; and errors in thinking and values. He saw the ideas that dominate our civilization dating mostly from the Industrial Revolution, with its emphasis on the individual, economic concerns as the priority, and looking to technology to solve everything and an attitude of us against the environment. He hoped a period of change could follow, that may be characterized by wisdom, rather than by either violence or the fear of violence (1972, 493). Ultimately he recognized that the problem of how to transmit our ecological reasoning to those who we wish to influence is in itself an ecological problem, for we are not outside this ecology for which we plan, but always and inevitably a part of it (504). Thus our ecological propagation of such plans is more important than the plans themselves.

Bateson (2002 [1979]) seeks to restore the perception, lost in our own epistemology but still existing in many others, of an ultimate unity, seeing beauty in the whole, which for Bateson suggests that the ultimate unity is aesthetic. We have lost the core of Christianity...We have lost Shiva, the dancer of Hinduism whose dance at the trivial level is both creation and destruction but in whole is beauty...We have even lost the Dying God (16). He sees our loss of this sense of aesthetic unity as an epistemological mistake, more serious than all the minor insanities that characterize those older epistemologies which agreed upon the fundamental unity (17-18). In the concluding mock ‘metalogue’ with his daughter, he answers her questions about the point and purpose of his book Mind and Nature (2002 [1979]), that the book is about the very wrongness of such a question and that it has a million – an infinite number – of “points” or if it satisfies her better, is a multidimensional sphere. A million points or none. As to why then, he writes it, he answers that it is because these are just pieces of the universe. “Purpose” appears as the universe is dissected. So his book (Mind and Nature) is partly dissection and partly synthesis...under a big enough microscope, no idea can be wrong, no purpose destructive, no dissection misleading (195).

Bateson (2002[1979]) thus posits our world of mental process as a self-healing tautology, which is always getting torn and may need to exercise its capacity for self-healing. He acknowledges a ramification of this is that certainly the human species may extinguish itself any time now. (How much truer for us now 33 years later.) Ultimately he hopes for the kind of clarity that would avoid the sort of faith or religion that covers up the gaps in clarity. He sensed our real need is to affirm membership in what we may call the ecological tautology, the eternal verities of life and environment. He saw the tendency to vulgarize religion by turning it into entertainment or politics or magic or power and saw these as mistaken attempts to escape from crude materialism that becomes intolerable. He suggests the answer to such crude materialism as not miracles, but beauty or ugliness: ...a single Goldberg variation, a single organism, a cat or a cactus... (197). Bateson is proposing that aesthetics and consciousness, and related questions of
the sacred, and the relations between them, are the great untouched questions that can now be mapped onto a primary definition of mind (Bateson, 2002[1979], 198). Why has it been so hard to answer them? And what will follow that map and enclose it in some wider and more difficult question? He considers these questions in his final book Angels Fear: Towards an Epistemology of the Sacred.

Manghi (Bateson, 2002 [1979]) stresses that Bateson’s voice is needed now more than ever. He comments that the reasons for the incomprehension and distortion Bateson’s ideas have met are to be found in the very patterns he critiqued in western thinking. Unlike conventional science his work matured into a science whose special interest was in combining pieces of information/pointing us to “the pattern that connects” (xxii). Further reasons for the dismissal are his lack of allegiance to a particular discipline which is problematic in academia. His interest went far beyond being interdisciplinary but in changing how we think, to seek a more ecological, more complex and more creative understanding. It is in the spirit and concern exemplified by Bateson’s pattern that connects that I frame this paper.
Dreams and precepts and stories are perhaps cracks and irregularities in the uniform and timeless matrix.

What is a story that it may connect the As and Bs, its parts? And is it true that the general fact that parts are connected in this way is at the very root of what it is to be alive?

“Purpose” appears as the universe is dissected...under a big enough microscope, no idea can be wrong, no purpose destructive, no dissection misleading.

These passages by Bateson when I first read them, made me draw breath. They haunt me with their poetry and insight. They speak terrifyingly to – they in fact answer – the years-long torment I have known around the question of stories. When my daughter was young and hearing stories in her Steiner Kindergarten, I registered the sensation of having a ‘hole in me the shape of story-telling.’ Bateson’s words turn the whole thing on its head in the direction of my long intuition, that I can’t make or tell stories because I feel the strangeness of the breaking of the whole. I think that Bateson saw and felt way too much, that everything usually inside was outside for him, leaving him almost skinless, without protection.

I am in a sense trying to heal and recover story for my psyche. I understand that story is not always about the words or content but about the telling and listening and exchange, about the story behind the story and the one that is never told in words. Many of the writers I explore here answer in part my hunger for the telling I yearned for as a child and adult. Therapiea is about telling and listening and here I am doing both, while striving for a cultural narrative that nourishes rather than impoverishes. Not only our visual environment is drained of beauty, but our soundscape too, is raucus and vulgar, and emptied of stories and the music of language.

I write from a sense of insanity, of madness that such an essay as this needs to be written, that I have to find words and writers to reiterate and back it up, that anyone should have to say any of this yet again, in yet another way. What are we???

Any peace or order I know feels to be wrested or borrowed out of an existential chaos and anguish. A sense of verbal, aural, and spatial dyslexia life-long remains unresolved. It took me until nearly my 54th birthday to suddenly register how to use two hands on the laptop cursor. Slowly over decades my body reroutes its circuits into integrity and coherency through tiny epiphanic moments. It is unbearably slow, but is surely happening all the time.
So for every naming of destruction in this thesis, there is a way of making and living things and life as beautiful, in consuming, dwelling, walking, everything.

So much has been destroyed I have cast my lot with those who, age after age, perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world.

Adrienne Rich, *The Dream of A Common Language*
NOTES ON THE THEORY OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Everyday life theory can contribute to creative and counterhegemonic discourse by increasing our awareness of the vital life that is remaindered in this realm, therefore made invisible and implicitly de-valued, through our prevailing models of work and economy. This can allow for new ways for us to use, construct and value our experience for social transformation. For if our ordinary creativity forms our cultural meanings and patterns, then it is through the everyday that these practices are sustained, reproduced or challenged, and might be transformed.

A form of attention to the particular qualities of our experience in modernity, the theory of everyday life is the non-category that captures for me a sense of the unity of culture that I wish to convey. The realm of the everyday describes most closely where I ‘live’ and have observed from all my life. It is the vantage point from which I have also experienced other cultures or places I have lived. ‘Everyday life theory’ allows us to value the *endless empiricism of the everyday* (Highmore, 2002) and to draw attention to the vast areas of remaindered experience that are spilled over into this realm by our prevailing models of work and economy and thereby devalued and rendered invisible.

Motifs of Everyday Life theory

Highmore (2002) suggests that everyday modernity signifies ambivalently. It can mean literally our repeated actions, most travelled journeys, and most inhabited spaces. It can also refer to the quality and value of *everydayness*, that is the boredom and routine and imprisonment in all these actions, what is so *everyday* that it becomes unnoticed, inconspicuous. So the everyday can be figured through notions of boredom, mystery and rationalism, that is, ideas and practices that are central to modern life. He describes it as a setting for radical transformations constantly disrupting the ordinary, a dynamic process of continual adjustment. Boredom arises through the temporal experiences of modern working life, arising from the emptying of time in the modern factory, bureaucratization of government, atomized working practices in the office, and the industrialization of home. It is an impact of domination by routines, systems and regulatory techniques. For instance, not until the railway and telegraph did non-synchronous time fully change to standardized time, which until then existed only at a local level. The related ideology of ‘continuous production’ that still informs our working life, empties work of creative content and empties time of significant markers, exemplified ironically by the phrase, ‘marking time.’ Weber claimed that technology alone cannot account for all this, but rather social structures such as law and administration, marked by Puritan asceticism (cited by Highmore, 9-10). Modernity also gives rise to the
mystery of the unconscious and its gothic narratives, the ‘exotic’ cultures of other people, such as the ‘poor’, the ‘native’, Freudian slips, and popular anthropology. Highmore references the link Freud identified between psychoanalysis and the everyday (eg. the idea of the unconscious as everywhere and nowhere; everyday communication as betraying repressed desire continually disrupting the world of everyday manners and conventions; the phantasmagoria to be found in shop windows). He sees a characteristic rationalism reflected in both boredom and mystery, in the form of the paradox that rationalism seeks to disenchant the world through unquestioned belief in its own value. Rationalism can be seen as ‘not the antidote to myth and ritual, but the emergence of new myths and rituals under the banner of the ‘true.’

For Highmore, it is the ability of ‘making strange’ within a culture of rationalism, finding the strange within everyday life, to render it visible, that is central to his particular study of the everyday. On another level, the relentless cataloguing of the everyday lives of ‘others’ is a central aspect of the culture of colonialism. Highmore cites two main opposed theories on the everyday: the feminine or feminist which links the everyday with the domestic sphere, traditionally dominated by women, and the masculine or masculinist which sites the everyday in public spaces and spheres dominated, especially in Western bourgeois societies, by men. Many theorists, such as Simmel and Benjamin, saw the sphere of the everyday as quintessentially urban, partly because of its technological changes and partly because of the romanticism of the city. This gendered pre-feminist theory leaves out women in many accounts. Highmore approaches everyday life in terms of the body of writing that addresses it as a problem for cultural theory, an everyday life characterized by ambiguities, instabilities and equivocation, and which stresses the difficulties of adequately attending to it. He is concerned with the writers who embrace the ability to make strange, replacing phantasmagoric representation with practical, poetic and critical operations; a concern with representational forms such as montage that are the opposite of what might be thought of as an everyday style of representation; and a refusal to reduce it to an arena for the reproduction of dominant social relations. More stress is placed on the everyday as a site of resistance, revolution and transformation. He considers the varying arguments of Georg Simmel (1903), Walter Benjamin (1936[1970]), Henri Lefebvre (1968[1984]) and Michel De Certeau (1984), along with the cultural formations of Surrealism and Mass-Observation, to trace attempts to find forms adequate to attending the everyday. He is working with the idea that the concept itself – everyday life – has a social life and history; he sees the history as important to the re-imagining of the concept.
Aesthetic questions are considered important to the discussion of the everyday for a number of reasons. Aesthetics is concerned with both mental and sensual experience, and is concerned with the way experiences are registered and represented; these are crucial concerns for theorizing the everyday. So it takes us to the realm of both ‘high culture’ and the way that artists often try and register ‘ordinary’ experience. The main ambition of avant-garde artists and practices of late 19th and early 20th centuries was to find forms capable of articulating modern everyday life. Everyday life has tended to be a residual category, what becomes remaindered after rationalist thought has exhausted the world of meaning, so it has much in common with aesthetics, that is, philosophical and scientific attention to sensory, corporeal experience, which is perhaps the very stuff of everyday life. Highmore cites Eagleton’s idea that rationalism has colonized our sensory experience, and asks, what do we lose when rationalist discourse covers areas of life that are non-rational? It is misguided if we seek to raise it to the level of ‘knowledge’ for it belongs to a realm where there is nothing to know. There are forms of representation that are more appropriate to the everyday, as they are already part of a world of representation, and though they cannot be proper or perfect, they can produce different versions of the everyday. For instance a poem might be seen as more fitting to attend to the world emotions than a sociological study. If anything, the everyday might benefit from refusal of the propriety of discourse, from testing the potential of different forms of representation. The kinds of attention available have been out of step with the actuality of the everyday. So the theorists he gathers can be seen to contribute to the creation of an aesthetics of and for everyday modernity. He quotes Brecht on the historical dimension to this issue: ...*Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change* (cited by Highmore, 22). By connecting technological and social changes with changes in everyday experience, Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto* was among the first texts to posit modernity as a revolutionary experience to be located at the level of everyday life, with its uncertainty, agitation, disorientation (attack on traditional beliefs) and assault on perception. What then is a suitable aesthetic form for registering this, for the avant-garde sociologist or artist? Highmore catalogues projects that borrow from the artistic avant-garde, existing on the borders of art and science but with this aim of addressing the everyday.

What aesthetic devices can exist in both an artistic avant-garde and a more sociological one? The first task in attending to it is making what goes unnoticed noticeable--the ‘making strange.’ Surrealism achieves this. Forms of artistic montage work disturb the seemingly ‘smooth’ homogenous surfaces of the everyday. This sociological aesthetic is not just to shock, but to register the full complexity and contradiction of the everyday. But beyond registering it through form such as montage, ‘everyday life theory’ also needs to organize and make some kind of sense of the ‘*endless empiricism of the everyday*’. 
The theories presented by Highmore (2002) offer an alternative aesthetic to attending to the everyday, that is alternate to precedents such as the instrumentality of government attempts to catalogue the everyday, high culture’s propensity towards expressive subjectivism in relation to the everyday, and science’s dour positivism. Rather, these offer an aesthetic which, in negotiating the experience of everyday life, does not claim to exhaust it. They are characterized by a hybrid mode of representation: *Never simply theory or fiction, philosophy or empirical observation, but on the borders and gaps between these representational categories. It is an aesthetic that questions suitability of ‘system’ ‘rigour’ and ‘logic’ for attending to the everyday* (24).

Archiving is another concern in the realm of everyday life. How to archive the everyday? How to organize and limit it in a way that doesn’t bury its polyphonic nature beneath an editorial voice? Mass-Observation attempted to let the everyday speak for itself, to negotiate the problematic tension between an infinite accumulation of singularities and taming that wildness into narratives, the tension between privileging either the microscopic (everyday) or the macroscopic levels (culture, society, etc.) In postmodernism, privileging has tended to fall on the side of the everyday. Maybe Highmore suggests, *everyday life* is the name for the desire of totality in postmodern times. But we do have to acknowledge, he suggests, how the grand narratives erase and ignore vast terrains of experience; we have to make the everyday visible in all its particularity. But then how to generate new and better accounts of the totality? Lefebvre handled this problematic by treating everyday life as the relationships between different registers of social life, and by seeing the singularity of the everyday event as reverberating with social and psychic desire and as related to national and global economic structures of desire and exchange. For De Certeau (1984), concerns about the archive are more epistemological. He sees anthropology and official studies of the everyday as repressing and erasing the culture they are supposed to be conserving, taming the lived culture into written culture, such as through the inscription of disciplinary writing. Yet its remainders erupt, existing between the lines and marking the work of their repression (all this as corollary to the West’s colonial expansion). So for him, the archive of everyday includes walking, talking, cooking, eating, and slouching. He suggests that the field of cultural studies needs more aural, olfactory and haptic archives. We also, De Certeau suggests, need to *everyday* archives already in existence, for instance, read the haptic through a photographic archive, and experiment with presentations of archival material that articulate it as a sensory realm.

Highmore (2002) discounts as premature any privileging of the everyday as a ready critique of dominant social forms. If the everyday has been absent from dominant discourses (eg. philosophy and politics) we
need first to bring the everyday into the light because any available politics has played its part in rendering it mute. We must first reverse this and foreground the everyday (as was de Certeau’s and Mass-Observation’s aim). For instance he reminds us that second-wave feminism in the 60s and 70s was a driving force not because of some abstract notion of ‘equality’ and ‘liberty’ but because of the empirical work of bringing women’s lives into discourse and often generating new forms of discourse in doing so. This feminism immersed itself in the everyday and brought about the slogan the personal is political, thereby provoking a transformation of politics itself to include the domestic and sexual. This should alert us to the potential of the everyday to generate new political forms. In other words, the job of description can be the necessary prerequisite for allowing new forms of “political” critique to emerge (Highmore, 2002, 28).

Lefebvre

Lefebvre saw rural festivals as offering liberatory potential for everyday life, and such privileging of ritualistic material can promote a cross-cultural or sub-cultural perspective in attending to the everyday, comparing and contrasting cultures in a way that denaturalizes either. What is crucial in this to Lefebvre and in some ways to Mass Observation and de Certeau, is that the critique of everyday life should be found within the everyday. So even if festival in modern capitalist cultures has become commercial and tawdry, it can still point even in this alienated state to a different possibility for life, a different logic. In short, rather than translating everyday life theory and practice into the available language of ‘critical’ politics, emancipation if at all, might be found, and critiques of the everyday will emerge, in the practises of everyday life, not in the rarified or deadening ‘realist’ programmes of political parties (Highmore, 2002, 29). So in terms of cultural studies, ‘everyday life theory’ holds out the invitation to rethink dualisms such as ‘resistance’ and ‘power’ by re-evaluating the productivity of description (as a foregrounding and recognizing of the everyday) and by re-imagining the practice of critique (by potentially generating new forms of critical practice). For instance, Highmore (2002) notes, Lefebvre believed that the Soviet revolution of 1917 failed because everyday life had not been transformed, that is, the revolution failed to release the creative potential of human beings on a daily basis. Lefebvre’s revolution would be continual and cultural (131).

One strand of attention to the everyday in the Surrealist movement was marking the sacred in the everyday. In the journal Documents, a research group at College de Sociologie juxtaposed cultural materials from a range of societies to challenge conventional categories and conventional ascriptions of
aesthetic value, and to re-imagine everyday Western modernity. They undertook a sacred sociology of the contemporary world; this was radical in its refusal to accept the myth of our rationalist post-sacred modernity. For instance, Leiris gave a lecture based on his publication *The Sacred in Everyday Life* at the college in 1938, in which he offered a list of sacred sites in his home, such as his family’s stove, his parents’ bedroom, the toilet, and so on. (Highmore, 2002, 56-58).

**Benjamin**

Benjamin saw modernization as an accumulation of ‘detritus,’ also of increased sensation and accumulation, as traced through his Arcades Project (Highmore, 2002, 63). He further saw it as characterized by a decrease in communicable experience, with traditional narrative forms no longer adequate for representing the modern everyday. His concern was how to find meaningfulness and a communicable form for this modern experience, as elaborated in his *Storyteller* essay (Benjamin, 1968[1936]). This concern hinged for him on the distinction between *erlebnis* (experience that is simply lived-through) and *erfahrung* (experience that can be reflected upon and communicated). In modernity, he suggested, we have a glut of *erlebnis*, but sensemaking that would give account of this within collective culture is blocked, *because these forms of communication, consciousness, and representation simply haven’t been revolutionized as daily experience has* (67). Thus our daily experience is one of shock that fails to be communicated or enter the discourse of experience that would allow the everyday a voice for critical attention and critical practice. For instance, an unskilled factory worker is degraded by the machines as his work has been sealed off from experience and cannot become communicable knowledge beyond the moment of experience (67). Benjamin saw Baudelaire as poet who gave *erfahrung* to this shock experience. He ultimately saw possibilities for *erfahrung* in the shock experience itself. He promoted forms of representation that offer a political articulation of modern experience such as montage in film, surrealism, and the work of Brecht. As a dialectical thinker Benjamin does not see modern cultural forms and modern experience as autonomous and discrete realms. So for him, *erfahrung* itself has changed, so that for instance, *distraction* characterizes both lived experience of everyday modernity and the forms most able to articulate it, such as the appearance of cinema, which established perception in the form of shocks as a formal principle (69).

**Mass-Observation**

The Mass-Observation project (Highmore, 2002) began in the UK in 1936, when a group of artists invited voluntary observers to participate in a project of collecting mass observations of everyday life. This was
considered to be a combination of psychoanalysis and anthropology, and made use of approaches such as participant observation and ethnography in the home. Highmore (2002) suggests that in proposing that participants speak for themselves, the project can also be seen as a radical challenge to the disciplinarity of anthropology and its desire to write culture “from above.” Mass-Observation was a complex and contradictory movement, investigating everything from reading choices to smoking habits to attitudes to margarine to personal appearance. Highmore notes, at its most radical and ambitious it proposes a ‘mass movement’ of direct democracy that, rather than commenting on everyday life, provides the conditions for participation in the alteration of everyday life (111). A first book-length publication had been produced by the end of 1937. The use of collage and montage allowed for the synchronic representation of non-synchronic simultaneity (94). Rather than aiming to change the world, the project can be seen as allowing for an analysis and a revaluation of experiences and as the production of a popular poetry of everyday life. Eventually the project became affiliated with a government body.

De Certeau

Highmore cites De Certeau’s (1984) work as perhaps the most whole-hearted attempt to fashion an approach to the everyday from the material of the everyday itself. De Certeau’s research was an attempt to focus investigation on the way people ‘practise’ everyday life, their ways of using the products imposed by a dominant order (xiii). For him, this involves the creative arrangements and re-arrangements of bricolage. De Certeau saw how people ‘make do’ with a ready-made culture and also ‘make-with’ this culture (Highmore, 2002, 148). He believed creativity was about re-using and recombining heterogenous materials. Highmore cites Buchanan’s clarification that for De Certeau, the everyday itself be treated as always already containing the possibility of carnival (Highmore, 2002, 149). Lefebvre emphasizes the extension of capitalist logic into the everyday, while De Certeau stresses the impossibility of full colonization by the system, the ubiquitous eruption of the heterogenous (Highmore quoting De Certeau, 2002, 150). For De Certeau, this implies a politics that emerges from the everyday rather than being applied to the everyday. (The current Occupy Movement would exemplify this.) Highmore notes that both Lefebvre and De Certeau concern themselves with the everyday as a phenomenal and aesthetic realm that requires attention to the style and poetics of living; both bring the language of avant-gardism to bear on the everyday. Certeau attempts nothing less than production of a poetics of everyday life (Highmore, 2002, 151).
Because the everyday is remaindered by conventional perspectives on social relations, De Certeau implicitly figures it as a sphere of resistance, but Highmore (2002) clarifies that in this sense, the term is more closely related to electronics and psychoanalysis, as that which hinders and dissipates the energy flow of domination or resists representation. So resistance may be as much an activity born of intertia as a matter of inventive forms of appropriation. It may sometimes be a ‘conservative’ response, in the face of a modernity that is frenetic. Cooking is, for De Certeau, one of our practices that evoke a cultural unconscious or imaginary, touching off past reminiscence (Highmore, 2002, 153). Attending to the invention of everyday life itself requires invention of a language, a poiesis that will register the poiesis of everyday life; so it is both an inquiry and an activity within language and life. De Certeau reminds us that ‘poetics’ from the Greek, means ‘to create, invent, generate’ (154). He makes use of non-oppositional binary terms to challenge the structures of binary thought, whereby consumption is inverted to be registered as a form of production. De Certeau’s book is his book is peopled with moments and practices rather than subjects (157). That is, familiar sociopolitical references which would ascribe these resistances to identities such as working-class, subculture, etc. are dropped, since domination, resistance, consciousness or unconsciousness belongs to buildings, techniques, gestures, machines, etc, as much as to people. The term strategy is linked to the proper, associated with power, ownership, property, place; while a tactic has no proper locus, simply taking opportunities that cannot be sustained. In an inquiry aimed at finding out not how power is deposed but how an entire society resists being reduced to the ‘grid of discipline,’ De Certeau is exchanging the urgency and instrumentality of politics (what must we do?) for an analysis (what’s going on?) (158-159). Highmore explains: Tactics is the inventive employment of possibilities within strategic circumstances: disguise, surprise, discretion, secrecy, wit, play, bluff, and so on (159).

De Certeau offers an example of tactical activity as the worker whose own work is disguised as work for their employer, such as writing a love letter on company time or borrowing a tool from work to build something. In short, the tactics take place within the blindspots of strategic forms, not through confronting or opposing it. Or in its more inert guise, resistance takes the form of when our body resists mindless and repetitive work, so that tiredness would be seen as resistance in relation to the drive for efficiency. Likewise, in archival practices and other sites, writing would be cast as strategic, while the rhythm, melodies and wild orchestrations of speech and gesture are foregrounded in a tactical reversal of usual ethnographic practices (Highmore, 2002, 169). Highmore notes that De Certeau’s language can be seen as a series of fluid and purposefully unstable categories, and cautions that it is restrictive to imagine a transformatory politics based on his attempts as it misses both the modesty and the ambitiousness of the
project. At its heart is, an absolute refusal to speak in the name of a vanguard that would lead the ‘people’ to their liberation or even betterment. Theoretically, De Certeau staked his faith on the tenacious otherness of everyday life (Highmore, 2002, 172). For De Certeau, a ‘politics’ of everyday life would be premature. His cultural policy was simply to foreground the everyday. Only after the everyday is allowed to emerge would something like a politics of the everyday become possible (172). For him the ‘management’ of a society leaves an enormous remainder of muffled voices that he wants to see take centre stage: a culture that can’t be described within the cultural forms of capitalism.

In his report for the French Ministry of Culture in 1983 (De Certeau worked continually with government agencies on cultural policy), he and his colleagues combined description with recommendations for a politics of possibility. It does not contain a “revolutionary” or “oppositional” form of politics but a series of modest and ‘everyday’ proposals’ (172). A moving example is cited of a live broadcasting program called ‘listen to yourself’ that was set up in a declining industrial region. Participants found out for instance that their fellow workers wrote poems or painted. De Certeau quotes a steelworker who was deeply moved at how it was possible to send words down into homes...and now I have a certain rage inside me. I want to write with an “I,” and on all subjects, that way no one will stop me anymore. I want to do it (Highmore citing De Certeau and Giard, 2002, 173). Highmore comments:

If the promotion of such speech events is a politics of everyday life, it isn’t about having certain ends in mind, but about generating beginnings...such a ‘politics’ (if it is one) doesn’t offer solutions, nor does it offer to overthrow oppression. This is a heuristic, experimental politics that puts its faith in the everyday as a means for its own transformation (173).

Highmore notes that this attention to the realm of everyday life theory should be recognized as operating within an international frame. The everyday can be seen as an arena for cultural survivals and revivals and- or the globally shared invisibility and remaining of everyday life, seeing connections between eg. peasant cultures in Brazil and North African factory workers in France, as did De Certeau’s work.

The Value of the Everyday for Counterhegemonic Discourse

We can see that a key value of the theory of the everyday is the counterhegemonic potential that resides in this realm. In approaching everyday life theory as a lens for cultural description and visioning, my concern would be to extend it to encompass more feminine inquiry and expression. (Highmore notes an
indifference to gender in De Certeau’s work.) I would propose a main concern for the realm of the everyday in regard to the concerns of this paper, to be the recovery of what we have lost in the way of our ‘occupations’ and the time and space available or allotted in the everyday for creative, improvisatory agency and recovery of lost, unused or unrecognized skills, through the effects of our prevailing models of work and economy. For instance, we do not generally frame or describe our lives in terms of what we do in the realm of everyday life. This activity is always backgrounded and remaindered while what we have come to define as ‘work’ is foregrounded. Though De Certeau does not seem to pursue this line of thought, it is largely our constructed notion of work, as separated off from simply what we do, that renders the realm of the everyday so invisible. Our model of work subsumes our life narrative and the richness of our ‘occupations’ in the everyday. So the realm of the everyday becomes a mere frame for our ‘work life,’ whose meanings are hegemonically determined and normalized, thus profoundly de-valuing the everyday. And here is another aspect that de Certeau seems to miss: that many of our everyday activities once were our intrinsically valued ‘work.’

I would also emphasize the everyday as a potent arena for the artist and for registering our innate human creative activity (see the discussion of Raymond Williams’ account of culture and creativity in Part Two), highlighting, when we pay attention to it, the performative nature of so much of everyday life. We can find expressive ways to represent the everyday, render it visible and meaningful as many art forms do. The realm of the everyday figures all of us as artists in being able to ‘act’ freely in this realm. The everyday also enables us to tease out many other nuances of social life, such as how to recover for ourselves a naturalized (rather than industrialized) sense of how we live the rhythm of the day or not; our innate balances between activity, rest and play; to register the substance and patterns of our family, community and intimate life; and the shape of our domestic life. The everyday is also significantly that framework that allows us a documentarian view of life and which affirms our everyday and fundamental powers of observation and reflection as sources and sites for counterhegemonic engagement and cultural transformation. Everyday life also is much bound with our sense of place, as we experience free hours that highlight our constructive and aesthetic relation to the places we choose to be. This in turn helps illuminate meanings of, for instance, local and global and the way these modes play out in our lives. I expand on these observations in the sections on place, globalization and elsewhere. The everyday then is where all dimensions meld, are lived, and where fragmenting divisions imposed by capitalist social forms are readily exposed. Throughout this paper, we will glean a sense at various junctures of how the richness of everyday life figures implicitly in a vital, creative culture, unimpeded by oppressive models of work and economy.
The Ikea Catalogue is the 3rd most printed thing on earth. [CBC Radio2 Jan.19.12]

I tend to feel and see the whole in things. But I tend to think or speak and sometimes to write, in pieces, painstakingly assembled, like a puzzle. My narratives, like the everyday, are severed pieces, torn from the whole, but always referent to it, and containing it. They are wrenched then, from this seamless fabric of the everyday. Thus this paper is patchwork, mosaic, weaving. It is to experience perhaps failing in one way and succeeding in another, the way that probably matters most to me. These narratives may be the closest I ever get to being a story-teller.

The everyday gathers everything – self, community, home, work, place. The Celts reverenced the day as sacred. David Earle’s dance class mimics the life cycle. In the everyday we can live differently. It is where we find a means of coping, protecting our deepest values, keeping faith, countering negative effects of capitalist environments, and it is our potential world-changing and transforming realm. Human experience is between/across the false boundaries we draw in our sequestered society, and it is our experience we need to listen to in theorizing and visioning culture together.

One of the first bits of culture shock coming back to Canada was the absolute insult as a pedestrian of how long you have to stand waiting at the corner of Quebec and Gordon Street to cross the road, while cars happily flood the road in both directions. Your rare privilege as a walker lasts about 3 seconds before the red hand starts waving at you. Then you stand statue-like again for another nearly 5 minutes, while the cars have their way.

Journal Aug 2011 - Meanwhile, poems are pulling at my skirts, waiting to speak of bees, crickets, cicadas, my celebrants of earth and life, and how they speak the language of desire. And one bee is just here all the time now, drinking from the tiny bacopa flowers and the strep plant, obviously in love with both. Later: he’s still here, the same one, hours later. My own pet bee.
How am I defining the everyday in these configurations? It is a conceptual, perceived subset of modern experience, that can be used as a framework to encompass and analyze large swathes of private/collective and temporal/spatial experience.

The art of the everyday

We need to recover that as providing experiences of the everythingness/or totality that we have lost. It is perhaps above all characterized by the element of participation. I think I am also trying to get at something to do with events or phenomena that are a layering of socio-cultural effects or dimensions; and phenomena that do not fit any category yet are utterly part of modernity.

Cafes are magical places which are continuously reconstituted through their configurations of design, arrangement, patrons, food, cooking, and being either outside or inside. They dynamically configure the private and the public (even the public sphere?) as adjacent and mutually constitutive realms, performatively enacting home, social life, event, work and play, inside and outside. In short, they iterate the celebratory, libratory, carnivalistic everyday, and in all of this, they iterate culture as creative (in their staging of artworks, conversation, fashion, food, and music – all as everyday).

The Everyday: Home

The central site of the everyday is the home, where we dwell [Lefebvre, 1966]. It is at once the most personal and political place; it figures a work of art, a field, a canvas, that manifests/mirrors/reflects our relation to the world by the way of life we follow within it: the materials we choose, the resources we consume within it, what we eat and drink, the way we divide the hours; these are the deepest mysteries and the most mundane things, the most private realm, where everything about us is revealed. It is where we most likely or easily can exist as autonomous, free and authentic actors; it is where we may be born as well as where we may die; it is a living, Shakespearean theatre where we determine the parameters of what is normal, sane or insane, of what is moral; all life-functions are reflected and lived out – how we eat, sleep, work or play, love or hate, how we raise our children, how we live in time and space, in the imagination and dream and memory and unconscious [Bachelard, 1994[1958]].
It is the place we can preserve, protect, maintain our own values and version of the world even if the outside differs. In all its material and processual aspects, it is the living theatre of our relation to ourselves and to the social. It can be our fairytale cottage in the woods where daily magic or mundanity unfolds; it is where we can maintain our connection to the archetypal, to earth, to the elements – fire, earth, air and water, to the fundamentals of rhythm and pattern and continuity; it is where we can perpetuate, duplicate and/or reproduce traditions, functions, technologies and dimensions of existence (personal, creative, familial, seasonal, social, political, economic and spiritual) in our own terms, whatever history presents outside the doors, and at whatever level of risk we may face in so doing. In short, home is the exemplary site where culture is germinated and/or reproduced in ourselves and in our children; it is where Winnicott says we go out from. It is the true site and carrier of culture. But, as much as where we go out from, it is also where we return to. Whatever culture we cannot find or create at home, we cannot ultimately have, is not ultimately our own.

If we reduce the contents of the home to the basis of culture, as only our homes can do so well, it is this: we are inside, safe and dry and warm with the walls and roof and fire, safe from the noise and presence of others; we cook and we eat, we sit, we play, we move, we be still, we create and adjust order/disorder/order in unending sequence; we create things, we watch them die; we work and we play; we welcome and feed and care for others, or we refuse them entry; we remember, we forget, we converse, we laugh, we cry, we make love, we sleep, we dream, we wake every day and face ourselves; we love, we murder, we give birth, we fall ill, we die; we create beauty or we create ugliness; we engage in conflict and we heal; we keep animals, feeding and caring for them; we create and understand the meaning of place and places; the home is full of places within places; home is where we hope to be able to be, and truly can be, which means to able to be (fully) in our bodies; homes are our holding-places.

In terms of sustaining life, the daily, endless round and those we share them with or with ourselves, we cook and eat and wash our cooking and eating things again and again; we sleep in and wash and make our bed every day; we wear and wash our clothes again and again with water, fire and air, and we care for them and repair them; we use, care for, and repair our tools and our furnishings and our things; then we go out to grow or buy food or tools or clothing or household furnishings; we walk out and we return; and so this fundamental circle goes on. Home is an unending story, peopled by ourselves and our household gods [Walter, 1988].

We can hold many cultural materials or instruments in our home: books, paintings, pottery, musical instruments and our voices (and bodies); TVs and technology to play music and to play films. Theatre or dance go on constantly in our rooms. To enable these essential
processes of home, we have essential *home-making things*, and these essentials are very few: a bed, a table, a chair, a rug, a candleholder and candle, dishes and pots and a stove to cook on, and...a shelf....shelves.......*hold everything*.

Wood is not only the fire of the home but the very heart and surface we live from.

My daughter’s childhood drawings of home or houses always, *always*, had as a central feature, the smoke coming up from what I was cooking as she sat playing.

Technology, followed to its logical extreme, will bring our economies back into the home the same way it took them out. For the last six years, I have done my jobs from home with my laptop.

When this thesis is finished, it is the small things that I so look forward to catching up with: the photo albums, filing, puttering and ordering, my recipe sorting and so on. I began with recipes as a teenager and I return to them now, always after recipes for life. And when we leave home in the day to work or do things, everything we do outside it is simply so that we can return at the end of the day and just be there at home.

All in

*Night* is another kind of holding. I think that is why I love it. It will hold you unto exhaustion and then you know you will sleep. Winnicott talked about that and it described my lifelong insomnia better than any words ever have. That when things are not right and held, you can only rest *in exhaustion*.

The other night bringing Micah in, it was midnight, the streets were dark, still and silent, so beautiful. Then the feeling of safety of all the familiars in.
Ethnography of an everyday

The road to the nursery is straight as a ribbon and empty, empty like the holiday Monday which is Victoria Day which means nothing except we lit firecrackers in the yard when we were small. The day is grey and there’s no one on the roads because they’re all off work and at home or at their cottages and the empty road cries its emptiness that there is simply no life here when people aren’t driving along it to work in the mainly industrial sector out here; it is a supremely dead zone otherwise and on this day it is a dead zone. I have it practically to myself because who else would ride a bike out here. It’s nearly about to storm and it’s windy especially on this dead zone road but I’m flying along it anyway because it hasn’t stormed yet and I want to feel the air and the wind as I’ve been working in my head on this thesis all day (I have read about Bookchin’s recovery of the notion of paidiea [1995] and I want to get a bacopa for my balcony. I was there yesterday on this same road, same bike but they didn’t have bacopa because, they said, the bacopa had been featured in their flyer in a mixed pot so everyone was buying them. I was buying one because I happened to buy one last summer and it turned out to be the most beautiful flower of my year and was attended unceasingly by bees, and was resplendent until October time. I rush along the empty streets, past sad houses, loveless buildings. A man crosses the road in front of a car turning the corner and the car honks at him and curses and he turns around half-drunk with his Coffee time paper coffee cup and cigarette and gives him the finger and then walks on, smiling at himself in some deep, careless place, already gone. I love the garden centre, this small sweet one up on Woodlawn Road against the back of the city, off the grid, run by a nice family. I love the plants, love the right rhythm of everyone being here on the May long weekend because that’s when we plant, whether three little pots or six acres. And when I’m getting back on my bike, having put the plant in the basket on the back, a man comes over and asks me how far I have to go. He says he used to cycle all the time and would carry two plants at a time... And I get back before any rain comes. And there is the pollen droppings from the maples along the sidewalk of the co-op below my balcony and so when I get back I go to sweep it. To do that I get the key from Sandra who has the key to the shed and she is just back from New Zealand where her family is. She and her husband are separated now but she has her children with her and one is autistic so she is here, like it or not, and has a lot on her plate. Mena comes along as I am sweeping to say hello and help me and she is, as always, smiling and when I ask her about her new job she told me about last time, tears come in her eyes and she tells me how she lost it she thinks, because her English wasn’t good enough and because she smiles too much. So I tell her I will ask my friend who works at Homewood whose sister is an RPN like Mena and works there too, and might be able to say who she should apply to... Mena was a doctor in
India but had to retrain as an RPN when she came here. The lilacs are out, my beloved!!! And finally I get back up to my balcony to plant my few pots out and now it is finally going to really rain, and so it pours as I am planting. It’s so beautiful and saving this second-floor balcony. It is my place. And tonight I sit at my table on it and read and so quiet this weekend because my immediate neighbours are away, but I do hear the little boy next door and their TV as he watches cartoons. He might as well be in the same room; our balcony is only divided by a fence. The primula from my mom is the heavenly centrepiece of this garden right now and the gerbera from my sister because she always forgets when I tell her they can’t take the shade which is most of what the balcony gets. I will likely talk to my daughter in England on Skype shortly but now the phone rings and a co-op member is calling with a grievance about a neighbour because I am on the member relations committee, and later I hear the news on CBC2 radio about the flooding in Quebec and Manitoba, and the wildfires in Slave Lake, and the crazy tornados in the U.S. And here it is crazy with rain and damp, much like England where I lived so long.

Nice to have a cat again. A little life to tend to is very sustaining.

Carrying

We have forgotten how to carry, that life is about carrying, the chopping of wood and carrying of water. When we carry here, especially as women, we look derelict, displaced. We are supposed to be in cars, clean and slick with our bags in the back. To carry, to walk, is to be among the displaced. Yet carrying is our very dialogue with life, the earth constantly carrying us and we in turn carrying the fruit of the earth to live our daily lives; the way we carry our children inside us, and then in our arms when they are small; we carry what we love, because we love, and for those we love. It is to carry the suffering of existence that our culture deigns to avoid. If we carry something home, we got it from near; we have brought it with us from there to here. To carry is care. To carry our weight. To be constantly free of carrying is to forget our place in the order of things. The bag-lady is constructed as our sad memory of carrying. Our culture makes us insufficient to ourselves. We have not learned the lesson to leave all carrying to others.
NOTES ON PLACE

Place is so primary and profound a human experience that it seems only to become richer when we read or communicate about it. Other topics can thin and almost evaporate as we turn towards them, or they become lost under the probe of analysis; place seems almost to demand evocation of its nature as if its mystery is boundless, even as it is utterly ordinary. It seems that we can turn the notion of place over and over and never exhaust discovery, finding only that meaning multiplies as we speak. Place is our home, both containing us and turning round with us as we move, ourselves being places too. No realm of life discussed here can be fully understood without reference to place: community, body, self, and work, all begin and end in place. Can our love of particular places be raised to the recognition of our love of place itself? Our present historical context of intensified globalization newly impacts our experiences and meanings of place through its iterations of other kinds of spaces and places. What is this place called globalization? How does ‘locality’ come to be understood and experienced in our time? How does place-making connect to sense making? Earth is our ultimate place of habitat and perhaps the terrible threats to its very survival are reason enough to consider place once again, from here, from a little bit of everywhere. These notes begin with reflections on dwelling and habitat through the work of Henri Lefebvre, followed by an exploration of Walter’s placeways inquiry, a phenomenological account of place by Casey, a cultural-geographic sense of how space and place intersect with social relations (Doreen Massey), a poetic depiction of pedestrian speech acts from de Certeau, and finally a citing of Alexander’s pattern language as a fully realized practical vision for beautifully embodying cultural value in the buildings and places we make, at every level and scale.

If we consider our human environments at every scale and level, from benches to sidewalks to markets, to fields, to city centres, and our homes, as spatial sources of physical and visual sustenance and pleasure with which we bodily experience exchanges of presence and meaning, then we grasp the implications for quality of life in how we vision, create and experience places, or how alternately we have no vision for them at all and rather allow them to be determined by economic or utilitarian values. The art of care hopefully extends to the creation and care of our places. What would an aesthetic view of life mean for our places? Paul Oliver (2008) in his book, Dwellings: The Vernacular House Worldwide, describes the way buildings and dwellings in many cultures are a human-scale simulation of the universe, through which we enact and engage with our environment, and make sense of our relations with the sun, moon, plants and animals. Do we even remember in the western world how to create such places, do we remember what it means to dwell?
Dwelling

In public housing, the poor are expected to dwell in an environment of administered surfaces.  

(Walter, 1988, 153)

Lefebvre (1966[2003]) observed in the 60s in the context of a French sociological study on habitat, that our Western culture has rejected ‘depth’ and traditional philosophical speculation in favour of a superficial, positivist approach, by which we compartmentalize and systemize human needs, including ‘housing.’ He cites Bachelard as one of the few philosophers troubling to ask what is habitation in his book Poetics of Space, and also cites Heidegger for noting (via Heidegger’s discussion of the poet Holderlin) the connection between dwelling, building, thinking (and speaking): dwelling is, in its essence, poetic; poetry is a form of building, a ‘making dwell.’ (Lefebvre takes care to note here that to dwell then, is not synonymous with housing one’s self.) Lefebvre proffers Heidegger’s apt warning that ...a lodging built on the basis of economic or technological dictates is as far removed from dwelling as the language of machines is from poetry (122). From this ‘operative’ approach, Lefebvre notes, it is easy to construct buildings or ‘housing estates,’ however

...it is less certain that the residents will be ‘satisfied,’ and less still that the life they lead in them is worth living. Would not the worst thing be for them to be satisfied with very little, to adapt? But on the other hand, there is depth, the intimation of a ‘total’ being of man, but this depth is not put to use. There is nothing operative about it. (123)

Lefebvre’s suggestion that to adapt would be the crisis, recalls William Morris’s observations about the loss of sensitivity he anticipated as people adapt to shabby surroundings. Yet there is the terrible dilemma of unused, unlived depths. We could make an analogy with our belief in fulfilling our human potential and particular capacities over the trajectory of our lives. A friend says, sin is being less than we are. Many of us take for granted such a belief that we must endeavour to live our potentials to the utmost. Yet how then could we expect the world we create to be any less than a reflection of that, including all places that we dwell in and move through? We know that when we want ourselves or the world around us to be ‘more,’ we know it is nothing to do with quantity or ‘success’ as such that we mean. We are rather intending the idea of quality, of, if we heed Hillman, of the teleology of beauty. How then do we reconcile this with the ‘operative models’ of building, the effectively impoverished experience of place that Lefebvre decries, now that we are half a century deeper into the instrumental culture then emerging?
Lefebvre (1966[2003]) draws out the point that, though habitation is one of the many attributes of being human, the modalities of these habitations alter dramatically through history with the larger society, with the mode of production and other factors. Moveable and immovable property constitutes habitation, embracing and signifying social relations (125). No one can assume the right to make rules for modes of human habitation or privilege an ontology that proffers its eternal verities about roots and rootedness. Rather dwelling must remain an open idea, where invention and discovery remain possible. Lefebvre insists we can imagine such continuing transformations as, even for instance, a way of life which would amount only to wandering, a worldwide, supra-terrestrial peregrination, a deliberate uprooting after each settling-down. Or, indeed, would find its only dwelling in poetry (124). Within habitation, Lefebvre sees that the human must ideally be able to affirm him or herself. That is, creation (what he calls here appropriation) must parallel domination of the environment or by the environment, or else there is only economic and technical growth, but no social growth. He cites the example of the medieval city, where, on a human scale, creations were made of time and space that could be compared with works of art. When this scale was exceeded, appropriation disappeared. Since then, for over 2,000 years, rationalized planning has never succeeded in penetrating the secret of qualitative appropriation of time-space, or to reproduce it to fit the quantitative requirements of what is called excessive urban growth (130).

For illustration, Lefebvre cites the pavillon (detached house) as opposed to the housing estate as one example of this poetics of time and space (for certain groups and societies), even when such appropriation is not reflected in social practice or structures. (Street life would be another example of an appropriated space.) The detached house gives more malleability for its inhabitants to create a system of signification, both semantic and semiological. Habitation in the detached house can be researched through various dimensions such as appropriation of space via a dynamic process of marking, enclosure, arrangement, through the utopian or mythic expectations of inhabitants in the form of an imaginary involving happiness and sense of safety; and through the ideology behind this property ownership (133). Lefebvre saw the need for further research into these matters, with the question ‘what does it mean to inhabit?’ remaining open.
**Place as matrix of energies**

*For the first time in human history, people are systematically building meaningless places.*

(Walter, 1988, 2)

We could hope then through such reflections to register or recover our deeper connections to place and environment. Walter (1988) cites the understanding in developmental psychology that the expressive character of experience precedes our rational understanding and our knowledge of things. Such is our experience of place that we grasp its qualities, its effects on our soul, as a total sensory experience. We know it immediately as for instance, good, sacred, or unpleasant. Walter cites depictions of place from Plato and other Greek philosophers as teeming with energies that arouse love or hate, or repose, that nurture or guide the soul, or that are sick, that understand cities as symbolic patterns. Architecture then can be seen as the process of making expressive space by material means.

Walter seeks a recovery of holistic theory with which to approach places, an archaic *theoria* that grasped the whole experience, the *expressive intelligibility* of a place, against the disciplinary conventions of sociology, geography, architecture, and city planning that fragment our experience of place, dividing thinking and feeling. In the 70s, he observed a ‘poverty of discourse’ and lack of theoretical resources amid the endless mechanistic discussion on the problems of cities, issues of urban planning, slums, and ‘social problems.’ He finds the lineage of such a *theoria* in Greek thought, where many sought a ‘union of sight with insight.’ Walter refers to his study of placeways as ‘topistics,’ in dialogue with Bachelard’s (1994[1958]) use of terms such as *topophilia* for capturing the poetic features of space (Walter, 1988, 2-5). In his research in places such as Boston and in Manchester, England, Walter and his colleagues hungered amid the inert ideas of social science for a *restitution of grounded intelligence*, for theory that took account of immediate experience and could render the obvious scrutable (9). Interestingly, Walter comments that in his becoming a place-lover – what the Greeks called *chorophilia* – he came to understand how the power of a place to move the soul (such as Manchester) does not depend on its being attractive to the senses (10).

Walter, building on Bachelard’s perception of the way houses support and protect our daydreaming, in its implications for how we approach our built environment, suggests that

We build a structure of consciousness by supporting the features of experience that we acknowledge. We make the obvious world by building it, and in constructing the world, we build ourselves, including our structure of consciousness. We build to support certain
features of experience and suppress others, and these decisions to acknowledge or deny them give form to the dominant structure of consciousness. (Walter, 1988, 13)

Thus, in our modern emphasis on the rational dimension of consciousness, we leave out in our building the expressive energies which the archaic world endowed with independent existences, imagining them as gods and demons. The Roman household was designed as the sacred, local habitation of divine as well as human beings, with the hearth (Latin word focus) as the centre of worship, and various spirits as guardians of the food, possessions, the door, doorway and floor. As well as the house being a sacred abode of household spirits, the character of a place was pictured as an animating protecting spirit called the genius loci. Medieval builders likewise expected imagination to animate the objects of human surroundings with decoration and ornament. Walter suggests a city that does not support the imagination is a dead environment. Our scientifically-based theories based on objective analysis, dating from Galileo, will always omit these factors by definition. Walter cites the movement of contemporary physics and biology away from such analysis towards holistic thinking (14-16).

He posits his ‘topistics’ as a form of inquiry seeking theories that represent and explain forces that make or break the integrity of located experience (18). The archaic theoria with which he resolves to undertake this, derives from the original Greek theoria, which actually meant seeing the sights for yourself, getting a worldview.

The term theoria originally implied a complex but organic mode of active observation – a perceptual system that included asking questions, listening to stories and local myths, and feeling as well as hearing and seeing. It encouraged an open reception to every kind of emotional, cognitive, symbolic, imaginative, and sensory experience – a holistic practice of thoughtful awareness that engaged all the senses and feelings. (18)

Walter cites Heroditus as one of these early ‘theorists’ who literally travelled to ‘inspect the obvious world,’ and would work with local guides called periegetes who would show them notable sights and tell traditional stories, acting as living archives, and with the best guides representing the whole integrity of places. Heroditus’ Inquiries explores the whole nature of places so that Walter considers him the father not only of geography, ethnography and history, but also of topistics. Walter considers that together these ‘theorists,’ their local guides, and those place-lovers (chorophiliacs) who stayed home, can be thought of as therapeutaes, the ‘close attendants of places’ (19). In this regard, he cites therapeia as close to the concept of theoria. The Greek word therapeia had broader meaning than it has taken on in our idiom,
referring to ‘close attendance’ or ‘caring’ for something, as defined by the context. So, for farming, it meant ‘cultivation;’ in reference to children, it meant acting as a parent; in relation to the gods, worship; for a physician, in relation to a person who is ill, healing; likewise, Plato made philosophy a *therapeia* of the soul. We need to take the same approach to cities and places, with theorists, guides and place-lovers among those who care for our places.

Walter (1988) notes that a renewal of such topistic consciousness and the work of toponomists (students of topistics) in studying topistic reality demands its own set of perceptual categories that can be derived from the ancient Greek astronomer Ptolemy’s distinction between geography and chorography. Geography represented the earth as a whole in terms of its nature, position, and general characteristics, so was a concern for mathematics; whereas, chorography aimed to show the quality of a place by artistic mimesis. Maps originally comprised expressive features, but were progressively rationalized. For instance, De Certeau (1984) cites how during the Renaissance, the map slowly disengaged itself from the itineraries that were the condition of its possibility. The map gradually becomes more autonomous; it *colonizes space, eliminates the pictural figurations of the practices that produce it* (121). As Walter (1988) notes, places are locations of experiences, not expressed by latitude and longitude. Its quality is constituted by human context shaped by memories, events, associations, and historical experience. In classical language, shifting meanings saw *topos* emerge as describing place, after Aristotle, in terms of pure position, while *chora or choros* described a place in terms of its subjective quality, such as a loved place or a sacred place, thus the term *chorophilia* for place-lovers (120).

Walters gives an account of Plato’s mythic doctrine of place as not a neutral container (as it was in Aristotelian thought), but a matrix of energies, an active receptacle the qualities of which cannot be abstracted from the things in it. Plato recognized the peculiar energy and activity of place, recognized in its ability to change awareness, to affect thinking and feeling or trigger imagination. He describes *chora* as one of the three great independent, eternal modes of Being in the universe. The first is the domain of eternal ideas and changeless forms apprehended by reason. The second includes the transient exemplifications of those forms, that is, perceived, sensory experience. The third, *chora*, is the receptacle of sensory experience and the seat of phenomena. Yet we cannot perceive its nature rationally but can only ‘grasp’ it with what Plato called ‘bastard reasoning’ which Walter reads as not reason and not sensation, but ‘sensuous reasoning’ (122). Corresponding to this is an exceptional mode of perception by which we grasp it, a kind of *dreaming with our eyes open* (123).
Plato thought of *chora* in her maternal and nourishing aspects as ‘the nurse of all Becoming’ (Walter, 1988, 122). He believed places actively take care of experience, filling it with energy that is busy organizing, shaking, and feeding (130). Indeed for Plato, this activity of the receptacle is the most important feature of Place. Chora is the seat of experience, that in which qualities appear, but lacking qualities of its own, the receptacle organizes the patterns and qualities of its contents—without place, bodies could not show the qualities and configurations we perceive. This organizing activity also makes a unity out of manifold perceptions (130). Put another way, experience finds coherences through strands of unity. One strand is our personal experience, so that we can name ‘Mary Brown’ as the locus of this or that experience. Nature is another unity of experience, which facilitates scientific discourse. But Plato saw Place as the first and greatest unity of experience. Some features of place then elude patterns imposed by rationalized perspectives such as economics or city planning. Thus Walter provides here the philosophical ground for understanding why the rationalization of place in the modern world contributes to the disintegration of topistic unity (131). In sum, Walter considers the human environment not as a life-support system, a spaceship earth (to use the dominant 70s metaphor), but as a structure of experience (205). He cites landscape artist Alan Gussow: *Viewed as a resource that sustains our humanity, earth is a collection of places* (209).

**The phenomenology of place**

*Lived bodies belong to places.* (Casey, 1996, 24)

Growing up from childhood through adolescence, we seem to have an innate participation in the mystique of place. We are always inside it without being able to articulate anything about it. In childhood, we seek and discover magical places, to be or be safe in. We discover, search for, or invent them, because we know they hold and tender us, and belong to us. In adolescence they become important to us in our need for untamed spaces to protect, contain and conceal ourselves, to incubate identity. Later we perhaps lose this innate appreciation of space and place. It seems fitting then to re-root ourselves in a sense of the phenomenological nature of place. So what is place?

Prefacing a book (Feld & Basso, 1996) on anthropological approaches to place, Casey (1996) notes the historical lack of attention to place by this discipline. He notes that anthropology has traditionally privileged dwelling over travel, and rootedness over unrootedness/uprootedness/transrootedness. Casey advances the notion, held by many indigenous cultures, that place is prior to space and that a phenomenological approach to place, rather than arguing from philosophical authority, can show us this.
The devotion of phenomenology to concrete description supports our understanding that local knowledge precedes knowledge of space. The role of perception is key in this approach. But Casey (1996) suggests this is more than a matter of the occasions of perceiving, (i.e. the sensations and the way these convey certain of the qualities of whatever we are perceiving): if we are always in a place/never not emplaced, how do we grasp this ‘in’, this preposition? In short, perception itself intrinsically contains and conveys something about being in place, what Merleau-Ponty considers to be ‘depth.’ Casey cites Husserl’s statement that ‘every experience has its own horizons’. Together then, the implication is that, precisely as surrounded by these depths and horizons, we are in the midst of a place-world. Both sensations and spaces are themselves emplaced from the very first moment, and at every subsequent moment as well (18). To be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it. Knowledge of place is an ingredient in perception itself. Such local knowledge is then, one with lived experience. Moreover, such perception is synesthetic, a whole body affair of sensing and moving, where this complex bodily perception meets places and objects of perception as already configured and meaningful: the sensory is senseful, not passive, but a mode of concrete action. In this way, Casey continues, we absorb but are simultaneously constituted. Just as the perceived possesses a core of immanent sense, which we actively grasp (preconceptually and prediscursively), so our cultural and social structures sediment themselves into the deepest level of perception (18). Ultimately then, the primacy of perception is a primacy of the lived body. The dialectic of perception and place (and of both with meaning) is as intricate as it is profound, and it is never-ending (19). This means we are never without emplaced experiences and that we are not only in places, but of them. We are place-bound.

Casey also supports the idea that place is general, a kind of universal, that is, not singular as the Enlightenment perspective assumed. In modernity, consideration of place has tended to be subsumed within the formal relations of space, but in recent decades it has found its way into focus in the fields of geography, sociology and anthropology. Casey suggests indeed the way back into place is through the lived body, and that, rather than the way Galileo construed the body as an inert entity subject to laws of motion and gravitation, the body may be essentially involved in matters of emplacement by virtue of its multiply-articulated structure (20-21). In this way we locate and integrate with place through, rather than being passively positioned in empty space. Summarily, the lived body – the body living (in) a place – is the natural subject of perception (22). (Casey is using terms of Merleau-Ponty, though they were not used expressly in reference to place). The lived body is the material condition for the possibility of the place-world while being itself a member of that same world (24). Though a given lived body and a given experienced place tend to present themselves as particular (with variations such as bi-located bodies),
there is shared porosity between body and place. Further, there is crucial interaction between body, place and motion: there is staying in place, there is moving within a place, and finally there is moving between places (Casey, 1996, 23).

Casey remarks how places gather – not just contents – people, things – but how the very mode of containment is held by a place. *The hold is held* (25, Casey citing Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger). *Being in a place is being in a configurative complex of things,* where the form of a place joins up with the shapes of the things in it. Places gather and *keep* us. And as we know, places gather thoughts and memories. The power of gathering allows us to return again and again to a place as the *same place* (25-26).

A place is generative and regenerative on its own schedule. From it experiences are born and to it human beings (and other organisms) return for empowerment, much like Antaeus touching the earth for renewed strength. Place is the generatrix for the collection, as well as the recollection, of all that occurs in the lives of sentient beings, and even for the trajectories of inanimate things. Its power consists in gathering these lives and things, each with its own space and time, into one area of common engagement. (26)

If place is clearly not something simply physical, what is it then? As Casey expresses it: *A place is more an event than a thing to be assimilated to known categories* (26). It is more a ‘*kind of something*’ than a *definite sort of something* (27).

**Place as Social relations**

...the spatial is social relations stretched out. (Massey, 1994, 2)

From a cultural geographic point of view, Massey (1994) argues for the dynamism of the spatial (as opposed to a static dimension where nothing happens), and is concerned to formulate concepts of space and place in terms of social relations. She sees space as constituted out of social relations: *...the spatial is social relations stretched out* (2). Since social relations are always imbued with power and meaning, the spatial *is an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification* (3). This implies a simultaneous multiplicity of spaces, existing in alignment, paradox or tension with one another. In short, Massey is conveying that the spatial organization of society is fully implicated in history and politics. Significantly this means that the mix of social relations that constitute any one place are not all contained within it:
Importantly it includes relations which stretch beyond – the global as part of what constitutes the local, the outside as part of the inside. Such a view of place challenges any possibility of claims to internal histories or to timeless identities. The identities of places are always unfixed, contested and multiple. And the particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counter-position to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections to that ‘beyond’. Places viewed this way are open and porous (Massey, 1994, 5).

In common with feminist arguments for ‘thinking in terms of relations’ and in parallel with debates about personal identity and the construction of political subjects, Massey is concerned to rethink concepts of space and place. In answer to the question, why is it that settlement or place is so frequently characterized as bounded, as enclosure, and as directly counterposed to spaces as flows, Massey looks to psychoanalytic approaches to identity-formation. She considers that the need for a defensive definition of identity is culturally masculine, designed for dominance. Rather, she is advocating a view of place where localities can be in a sense present in one another (7). Just as we are multiple and contradictory subjects, inhabitants of a diversity of communities, so are the identities of place (Massey quoting Mouffe,7). Such formulations of identity, Massey significantly points out, problematize any assumptions of coincidence between community and locality (15).

Massey sees then the identity of place as a double articulation: place as particular articulation in space and time; and the construction of the subjects within them. She also notes that such ideas of place-identity are always constructed by reference to the past, preserving some idea of a stable history, and lending itself to reactionary politics. In truth, any previous identity was unlikely to be anyway, a unified or authentic history. We can certainly seek to conserve but she suggests the debate should rather focus on the terms of both conservation and innovation, that is, the politics of definition of – a particular envelope of space-time (8-9). Massey also suggestively draws attention to the customary binaries and gendered systems of meaning drawn, whereby space gets associated with universal, abstract/theoretical, masculine; and place with being concrete, local, descriptive, home, feminine. Massey remarks on the limited application of such associations. But she points out, whether place is for instance, denigrated by virtue of these associations, or longed for and thereby seen as a form of nostalgia and aestheticism, it is in both cases being interpreted as key in the search for identity in this supposedly troubled era of time-space compression. She is concerned to dispel these culturally-specific readings, such as those that would see the mobility of women
as a threat, and points out for instance how many women indeed have to leave their places/homes in order to achieve their own identities. Massey (1994) challenges the local-global dualism that arises from these associations and from historical notions of space and place (10-11). She analyzes the nature of each and their interconnections. She is concerned to dispel, for instance, the identity between the local and the everyday, and cites the studies of Michael Peter Smith with transnational migrants that imagine approaches – over and against our simplistic assertion, ‘think globally, act locally,’ – of thinking locally while acting globally and of living and acting multilocaly (16).

De Certeau’s long poem of walking

*Walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc. the trajectories it ‘speaks.’*

(De Certeau, 1984, 99)

De Certeau (1984) writes of what he calls pedestrian speech acts. The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered...Walking is a space of enunciation...appropriation of the topographical system...a spatial acting-out of the place (97). It implies relations among differentiated positions in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation posits the speaker and puts contracts between interlocutors into action). The walker makes the spatial order exist as well as emerge; she crosses the spatial order, expands it, drifts away, improvises within it, transforming or abandoning spatial elements and signifiers, such as Charlie Chaplin with his cane. In this framework of enunciation, the walker also constitutes a near and a far, a here and a there (another parallel with linguistic enunciation). This appropriation of space by an ‘I’ also introduces an other in relation to this ‘I’, establishing a conjunctive and disjunctive articulation of places. He stresses the ‘phatic’ aspect of this – that is, terms that initiate, maintain, or interrupt contact, such as ‘hello’, ‘well, well’, etc. This effort to ensure communication in language also dances/walks about, light or heavy, like a series of ‘hellos’, anterior or parallel to informative speech. It composes spatial ‘turns of phrase’ that are ‘rare’ ‘accidental’ or illegitimate; this leads to a rhetoric of walking (97-99). This could be represented by a plane on a map and analyzed in terms of the relationship this enunciation makes with particular paths or statements by according them a truth value, an epistemological value or an ethical/legal value, applying these different modalities, all of which sing a part in this chorus. These enunciatory operations are of an unlimited diversity; they cannot be reduced to their graphic trail.
Walking rhetorics consist of composing a path/turning phrases, an individual’s fundamental way of being in the world; tropes used in rhetoric furnish models and hypotheses for analyzing ways of appropriating places. De Certeau (1984) sees two postulates as validating this: 1. spatial practices also correspond to manipulations of the basic elements of a constructed order, 2. it is assumed that they are, like the tropes in rhetoric, deviations relative to a sort of ‘literal meaning’ defined by the urbanistic system. He is concerned then, to draw the homology between verbal figures and figures of walking. It is implicit that the geometrical space of urbanists and architects has the status of ‘proper meaning’, analogous to that constructed by grammarians and linguists to provide normal and normative level to which they can compare the drifting of ‘figurative’ language (which can never actually be found in current use, whether verbal or pedestrian; it is merely the fiction produced by a use that is also particular) (100). The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations (101). The figures of pedestrian rhetoric substitute trajectories that have a mythical structure for the technological system of a coherent and totalizing space (102). Figures are the acts of this stylistic metamorphosis of space.

To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a ‘proper’. The city itself is an immense social experience of lacking a place. De Certeau conjures the way we relate to names of streets. …they become liberated spaces that can be occupied…articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning. They insinuate other routes into the functionalist and historical order of movement. Walking follows them: ‘I fill this great empty space with a beautiful name’ (105).

For de Certeau this is all apropos of three connected functions of the relations between spatial and signifying practices, between walking/space and its relation to self/story/memory: What this walking exile produces is precisely the body of legends that is currently lacking in one’s vicinity… and is …composed with the world’s debris, and that stories diversify, rumours totalize (105).

In this place that is a palimpsest, subjectivity is already linked to the absence that structures it as existence and makes it ‘be there’…ultimately the repetition, in diverse metaphors, of a decisive and originary experience, that of the child’s differentiation from the mother’s body. It is through that experience that the possibility of space and of a localization (a ‘not everything’) of the subject is inaugurated (109).

*To practice space,* writes De Certeau, *is thus to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood; it is, in a place, to be other and to move toward the other* (110). He continues: ...*With what subtle complexity*
stories, whether everyday or literary, serve us as means of mass transportation, as metaphorai (De Certeau, 1984, 115). In Greece, vehicles of mass transportation are called metaphorai, so De Certeau is marking how stories traverse and organize places; select and link them together; make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories. Thus every story is a travel story, a spatial practice. …They organize walks. They make the journey, before or during the time the feet perform it (116). Stories are ...a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places (118). …Everyday stories are treatments of space, a marking out boundaries. Story plays a decisive role in the organization of spatiality; it is a culturally creative act/it founds spaces (De Certeau, 123).

Its primary function is to authorize the establishment, displacement or transcendence of limits to set in opposition the setting and transgression of limits; its essential narrative figures seem to be the frontier and the bridge. So the first function is to found or create a theatre of actions, the second to create a contradiction between frontier (legitimate space) and bridge (alien exteriority). Boundaries are transportable limits and transportations of limits; they are also metaphorai (129).

**Alexander’s Pattern Language**

Christopher Alexander’s *Pattern Language* (1977) is a densely intricate and invaluable tool for materializing our homes, places and communities wherever they arise. Alexander is a British architect who, with his colleagues, designed a ‘pattern language’ providing archetypal answers to design problems so that people might design their own houses, streets and communities. His collection of one hundred and fifty three patterns spatially reflects the integrity of life and community functions – work, household, public spaces, common land, and community members at all phases of the life cycle as intermingled. The patterns are founded in extensive technical knowledge, a deep grasp of social relations supported by empirical studies, and the recognition of how space and architecture so powerfully shape our private and social processes. Alexander’s work seems to profoundly embody the approach of *teoria* and topistics articulated by Walter.

Kingwell (Kingwell & Turmel, 2009) confirms the sense that these days, as he expresses it, *Alexander’s language is more appreciated by computer programmers than by architects and urban planners* and acknowledges the lineage of Alexander and his (Kingwell’s term) paths of desire (ix). He cites the example of Alexander’s pattern no.94, *Sleeping in Public*, which asserts: In a society which nurtures people and fosters trust, the fact that sometimes people want to sleep in public is the most natural thing in the world (Kingwell & Turmel, 2009, x). Kingwell registers that in our culture, such an act is strongly
disapproved and most often a policeman will move such a person on. Kingwell (Kingwell & Turmel, 2009) captures the full hegemonic implications of such a taboo:

Sleep allows dreams; it knits up the ravelled sleeve of care; most basically of all, it keeps us sane. Sleep deprivation is the cheapest and crudest form of torture. Much is contained then, in the public injunction against sleep: the tyranny of the work ethic against idleness, of movement against rest; the presumption of a home to which sleep should be properly relegated; the lack of trust signalled by finding a sleeping person unnatural or offensive.

(x)

Kingwell contrasts this to the radical nature of Alexander’s dictum in pattern no. 94:

Keep the environment filled with ample benches, comfortable places, corners to sit on the ground, or lie in comfort in the sand...Above all, put the places for sleeping along building edges; make seats there and perhaps even a bed alcove or two in public might be a nice touch. (Kingwell, quoting Alexander, xii)

It is worth noting that Kingwell’s mention of Alexander is the sole one I encountered among the 150-200 books on cultural theory I have consulted over the last year.

Among the many insights yielded by these accounts on place, there is the realization that our language so often lacks the richness of words for nonrational experiences. As Walter (1988) notes, *we build a structure of consciousness by supporting the features of experience that we acknowledge...* and, *we build to support certain features of experience and suppress others* (13). The absence in our common discourse of the many notions here relating to place, many of them gleaned from antiquity, seems particularly notable, and such a lack is reflected in many features of our built environment. If we build to suppress consciousness by the utilitarian approaches that Lefebvre discusses, then place aligns with the hegemony of our operative models of work and economy and undermines genuine community. At best, place becomes like the negative space in art, remaineder, a minimum of presence, incidental to prevailing social structures. This may pertain especially to some North American localities where ill-considered and synthetic environments can seem to predominate, perhaps the outcome of an empty canvas where space, affluence and rationalized approaches can outrun history, depth of culture and aesthetic concerns. This can contrast with European contexts (among many other examples) where many places retain their original/built integrity which is not easily altered, even as redevelopment occurs over the generations.
Geertz comments that we need ethnographies of the places we come from, not just studies of the 'other.' We need to extend this attention to our experience of place-worlds to central sites of contemporary life (Feld & Basso, 1996).

If we were all place-lovers, truly attuned to the energies and meanings of the places where we dwell and pass through everyday, if we knew our place, would we be able to pour debris into our living water, or decimate populations? Could we bring ourselves to ‘house’ human beings, or bear to be housed, in box-like ‘units’? Would we be so bold as to patent the seeds of life as our own corporate property? How much sense do we lose, when we lose our sense of place?
Everywhere in Place

I have experienced a pattern of layered, intersecting subcultures and communities, through living in other places. Based on these experiences, I conceive the value of discovering other places as aesthetic and experiential texts through which we phenomenologically encounter, read, and learn about life and in doing so, recognize, heal, or repattern ourselves. We thereby reconstitute culture by participating in these multiple subcultures and communities and the localities where they occur. Such subcultures may be precisely the form of communities some of us experience. In effect I have formed myself by absorbing and imprinting pieces of culture, forming the mosaic of myself and my life. The diverse experiences they have provided reveal how communities and cultures can exert widely varying forces for stasis or vitality. Many of my experiences reflect what Buber called ‘partial utopias.’ These elsewheres become historically part of our lives and being and we carry them into all we do and experience. They are a story of aesthetic responses to place. They have all assisted me towards finding my ‘place’ in life and what qualities I love in place. I only have been able to know where I have come from through being elsewhere. Often we only truly know places and our belonging to them when we leave and return to them after a long time. bell hooks (2009) writes.... Hence we return to the unforgettable homeplaces of our past with a vital sense of covenant and commitment (65).

I emphasize the fact of this simultaneous layering and intersecting of many communities and subcultures, even within the same country. I have made a pattern of places through which intimate swathes of my experience are woven, altogether forming this ongoing process known as my ‘self’. There is nothing unique in this experience but it asks that I make and hold a relation to these places that did not end with my leaving them. Beyond what each means in its particularity, they have together taught me about places, that places are processes just as our selves are (Massey, 1994). They have taught me about relationship. They have taught me how manifold is the notion of home and belonging. They have taught me about rupture and grief. They have taught me a deep understanding of what local means. They have taught me about hardening cultures and softening (healing) cultures.

Out of the sensual seamless fabric of these experiences, I can read these cultures for how they manifest particular qualities and values I have defined through my experiences in them, namely their levels of creativity, community life, vitality, diversity, beauty, feeling-structure, their overall music. For me, these values or qualities can be read through (or I would now read them theoretically through) such interrelated indicators as: climatic and geographical context including the interface with rural surroundings; diversity of population; the general aesthetic
and architectural quality of the lived environment and its spaces/places, including layout, houses, and public buildings, cleanliness, levels of natural and green space and pedestrianization; the vitality of the city centre or high streets; food culture and relationships to gardening and agriculture; the quality of material, mediated and cultural goods and resources available, and how locally-produced these goods are (all three kinds of goods) and the overall cultural mood and structure-of-feeling as read through these, such as the scope they offer for a diversity of sub-and-alternative cultures, (including youth culture); the quality and aesthetic of public-community spaces and cultures such as streets, neighbourhoods, cafes, parks; good and diverse work possibilities; kinds of businesses they attract and support; school, learning and educational resources; general tone, appearance, attitudes and ‘voice-speech’ patterns of the citizens; quality of social services and resources available, including resources for health and well-being, public transportation, including bicycle and pedestrian features; political attitudes, that is the values of openness/closedness (conservative vs. alternative/emergent; and how they exert forces for stasis or vitality; how the needs and rhythms of the lived body are accommodated or suppressed by the environment and its provisions; historical character.

If I analyze the specific types and categories of places that I aesthetically register as key measures for quality of life, they would be: neighbourhoods and street life, libraries, high streets, walking trails, houses, gardens and allotments, food and goods markets, mixed-use features; community spaces such as parks, cemeteries, secondhand stores, thrift stores, bookstores, cafes, interface with beaches, rivers or other water places, trains, Tube, buses, walking and biking provisions, animal culture, and therapy/health resources; and a valuation of both the rural and urban and what each can mean. I am not specifically considering the presence of resources for employment here but, in this context, treating their presence as implied amongst these features, and also many of these places would themselves provide employment. Likewise I am implying historical presence as a value. I am focussing here deliberately on the aesthetics and quality of life provided by the lived, physical environment and social life as key determinants for human fulfillment and happiness, because I believe they are severely neglected and we must become co-participants in their visioning at all levels.

I find that what matters, interests and affects me most about a place is its very sense of place, its everyday, physical vitality as experienced through street life, social life, public and community spaces, all of which are conditioned by the quality of cafes, thrift shops, food shops, bookstores, markets, antique-flea markets, parks (all of which I consider to be true cultural venues). The key criteria are that this social life is immediate, directly experienceable outside your door and intrinsic to everyday life, by all ages and social groups. This access does
not need to be mediated by destination, commodification, or programmed spaces. It is not related to use of cars but is oriented to a walkable environment. These criteria amount to conditions for what I consider to be a participatory and sensual environment, enabling the quality of being able to be/in companionship with others. Often the integration of nature and culture is implied. A key factor is the way a place can engage us imaginatively. For instance, interestingly Walter comments that in his becoming a place-lover – what the Greeks called chorophilia – he came to understand how the power of a place to move the soul [such as Manchester] does not depend on its being attractive to the senses. London (UK) is like that for me.

As a pilgrim of places, I conceive my own place experiences as a phenomenology and poetics of place. This approach implies a number of ways of conceiving both experience and places. These include: places as vessels teeming with the materials of culture and teeming with intersecting communities and subcultures; places as always unique cultures, even within the same country, revealing how abstract is the concept of ‘nation’; place as pattern, and I believe it is patterns that hold us, not places; experience as always mediated and memorized through places; places as sites of experience and of experiential learning; communities and subcultures as in part always constituted by, and also as containing places; place and environment as event; place as constituted by a rich layering of food cultures, physical scapes, natural scapes, cultural scapes [businesses, public buildings, cultural venues and products, parks], and community scapes [family groupings/subcultures/workplaces]. And of course places give us people, and my places have given me many. Just as people call up places, places also mean the people who are one with them, who partake of them. Sometimes also, people give us places.

I realize walking around the park today Jan. 15.12: this thing about getting the meanings of ‘locality’ clear, etc, it’s that – Yes this is it – it’s that the descriptor ‘local’ is about the mode of relation between you and whatever we describe as local. The interrelation is the same. So wherever we are we can hold the same connection to the local – both that local which is physically near to us and the local that may be materially far away from us but still bears the same meaning and relationship, or the local that is far away and we are there and enacting in relation to it the same locally-oriented mode of relations as we would anywhere. Wherever we are, we relate locally and globally. Put another way, we are always located and local, wherever we are. [Appadurai’s ‘teleology of the local’ captures this in part]

Everyday life also is much bound with our sense of place, as we experience free hours where our choice of where to be and how to be there expands and is determined by our own creative or constructive or aesthetic relation to the places we choose to be.
Is locality the very pattern of ourselves, wherever and to whomever its reach?

In my soul, this paper begins and ends with a book that my daughter gave me, sitting next to a tiny real Christmas tree with sparkling red lights, in her bedroom in the top-floor of a cold student flat in Bath, England in December 2009. She’d ordered it for me on Amazon and it came in its cardboard wrapper and Christmas paper over that, a thick hardcover copy of Christopher Alexander’s book, *A Pattern Language*, published in 1977. I’d first come across it a few years back while doing an undergraduate degree in English and cultural theory and had got a copy from the library and had it sitting there for months and never had time during the thesis writing to look at it properly and then had to give it back. I knew immediately it was one of the most important books of my life, and happened to mention it to my daughter at some point around the end of her first year in university when we were chatting on Skype about topics for her essays. I didn’t expect it as something that would necessarily stay in her mind but, as so many times, she surprised me when she presented me with it as a Christmas gift that she had specially looked up and ordered, after I had just completed my first semester in the CDE program. The most precious of gifts. The book has been there on my desk ever since among the other couple of hundred books floating through my life over the last two years. It has, as I had imagined, turned out to be the invisible heart of it. Eventually, someway it will be present here or in some future place.

The building of student flats in Bath where she and her flatmates lived had the beauty and excellence of building that all the buildings in Bath do. Just looking at the eaves outside any upper window was a revelation of strength and function. There they were, deep eaves built as an extension of the brick of the building itself all round. As I live, as I walk the streets of Guelph year after year, I am ever drawn to the structures and materials of the gorgeous houses here in this medium-sized city in southern Ontario. Large or small, but especially small, I desire ever to be surrounded by the solidity and the temenos of a beautifully built house. Something I’ve desired for some years now. A small thing to desire, really. Something we could all, surely, have in life if nothing else. *If nothing else, just that*. I would love to build a house in the pattern language, the ‘house for one person’ (pattern no. 78) or more..., and have in it ‘open shelves’ (pattern no.200).
... struggling to sort out conceptually the relationships between home and place and the everyday, and so far I can only answer something like this:

The everyday happens through/is isomorphic with, place

Place contains home; so home also contains the everyday, and the everyday also contains home>

> Home is the place where culture is compressed into the everyday/microcosm; it compresses or layers every realm of life that we have divided and almost everything we know outside it is to some degree a mental construct

Home is a place

Place is home, that is we are at home in place

Home contains many places

Home can be many places

After I have walked it for ten years, the City has put up a metal rail along the river path all along from Goldie Mill Park up to Riverside Park, dividing the train tracks and the now paved path. It is clean and guided now and part of the proper order of things. It is not the same place. They have wiped away its little wildness by the river. They have made it part of our ‘leisure’ life.

At the Stone shop the other day, I bumped into my friend and we wanted to talk a few minutes, both of us too busy to be very long. We walked up behind the building and found a little wooden ledge I’d never seen in a spot neither of us had never sat in. The day was warm, the spot sweet and shady and it was a place between places.

Mar 18, 2012: Today Hannah sends me a photo of her and her sister sitting together on the bench in the churchyard in St. Stephens, Cornwall, that was placed there three years ago in memory of their grandparents. They sit at either end, young and brimming with life, and between them you can read the names of their grandparents. This is the first time my daughter has sat in that place. That bench-place.
I have always loved when people give you places, the way Peta Fleming gave me the way to the river trail by Staverton in Dartington that passes across the very old stone bridge, the river lock, by mounds of snowdrops and through fields and ends up in the pub by Staverton.

**Nest**

Spring 2011: I have engaged in the reading and writing of this thesis to the accompaniment of a nest of mourning-doves weaning two fledglings at eye-level, inches away on an old wicker shelf on my second floor balcony. In my reading on Apr 18, in the book *About Raymond Williams*, the essay on RW and ecology was talking about the proliferation of nest imagery as a feminine space in Williams’ novel *People of the Black Mountains*, and how it builds on Bachelard’s notion of an original shell behind every human dwelling. Outside my door that very day, the baby dove was beginning to move about next to its mother.

**My emerging thoughts from reading Senses of Place in Hannah’s and my Christmas place (2010) are:**

knowing our place - how crucial it is that we *know our place*. If we knew our place we would not eg. make GMOs or invade others' boundaries...or lose touch with our bodies/lived environments.

I am articulating observing my/a place (ie. not arguing a position).

my want of a *work-place*

of my place in life...

my experience of the lost – place

the place of carrying
the place of wisdom
the place of love
the place of rhythm

**Oct. 7.11:** To be is to be in place: being in place. My place in the world/existence, my place in family, my place in that event, etc...we have so many places, are in so many places. It has its place. We need to give it its place. When we say eg. ‘I had no place there’ it must mean our being was not held-in-imagination there, whether physically or psychically. That's what Casey means in saying to be is to be-in-place. Everything has its place. What about the connection between place and naming? To name something is to give it a place...
The threads between location and relation run deep and are not simple, these geographies of the heart; *relation is location* all corroborates eg the Senses of Place book. August 5, 2011

Stricken, gradually since through yesterday, with what? Yes, nerves, about thesis and about work. But so much more. Something deep, fracturing and just coming through, just felt, before known. A terrible grief. It is a malaise in my gut too, a sickness, physical. It is I understand gradually, about the shift of my relationship with Hannah to a new physical locus, as well as a different locus in me, and the ever-shifting locus within her as she matures. Registering, really now, how we are always but always, speaking from and through different places and spaces within and outside ourselves. Fully registering it now, what happens in me when she is in these places-between. Before, it was subtler and more qualified, as in when she was living at Ben’s house; when they were travelling; for more brief times when she was away herself for a week somewhere, and then in her second school year summer in Bath, which was more a psychological space between. Those times, there was still a sense of some anchoring, a clear in and out breath to be had, the knowledge of where she would be next and when; there were predictable, imaginable edges to the unknown space around her present place. Now, as she has graduated from university, a major life jumping-off point, leaving Bath, leaving school, leaving her boyfriend, leaving their student flat, all at once, and suddenly ‘dropped’ into her aunty’s house. for however long, there is a sense of utter un-mooring. The sense of both our relationship and her, as being set adrift. Our relationship is clearly held/bounded for me, constituted and conditioned by, not only her stability inherent or not in any physical location, but what has come before and above all, what is to come after it. That is, I know where she is, who she is, and in relation to me and to past and future. And then suddenly: now: I don’t. And with her changing too, into a full young adult woman. With all of it together, the sense of loss, maybe not loss, but deep unsettling and distress, is formidable. Not so much that the next place/life-activity she might occupy is not to some degree imaginable, but that if anything, there is *too much imaginable* in both activity and location; there are no confines anymore. And I understand now how deeply these confines, these boundaries, what in fact is in some ways reducible to the *known*, are what keep the long physical distance, the separation, at bay; make them bearable for me. They keep her nearer to me.

walking is a place of its own

And how I often know as I walk; I walk, therefore I am; Walking is being, I ground myself by walking, bathing, cooking, the rhythms of the day.
Walking out around the park, on this too hot Thanksgiving long weekend afternoon. To walk is to partake of the day, to par/take is to be part of; to take part of common being. Walking, the body becomes script in the landscape. To walk is to be nowhere, where I am most myself. To walk is to become part of the ceaseless flow, chance improvisatory movement of life, to belong to everything, to wander, to drift.

How do I feel these things? Do I feel them or do I know them through idea?? I have not answered this yet for myself. Wait, I think I know. I think that I feel the joy and then enjoy the attempt to describe and explain it. But I believe that ideas can be laid over our bodies, matching them cell to cell until they are one, until they become the real.

The sore loss of swimming-places is among the greatest wounds to the world in my heart. What living body could pour poisons into a living river, lake or sea?

One-line story: A character asks of someone “Is there anywhere around here that you can swim?” That is what I asked of a ranger we encountered at Belfountain Conservation area or nearby on my 50th birthday with my daughter and friend Sue. all those places I finally thought we’d try to go to, but in them, no real places, no swimming-places. It is a deathly feeling.

The power of ‘cleansing conversation’ while sitting at the Arboretum; how words, when they are right and needed, cleanse us.

Home

All really inhabited space bears the notion of home. (Bachelard, 1994 [1958])

For this brief moment I feel more at home in the universe than ever, flopped spontaneously on the grass by the door, hot after my walk. My cat is on the step behind me, black velvet, keeping himself cool in this unseasonal heat, content at the flow of life around him. It is the first time in the 10 years I’ve lived here that I have done this, flopped on the grass next to the stoop by the door. Why? The quick answer is because you are just exposed, splat on an unfenced expanse of grass that spans the length of the co-op grounds laid out like a stage for viewing by the houses across the road. Some young people who live in the house across the road are carrying bowls out the front door, on their way to visit family for Thanksgiving. I’ve
seen them there lately. One of them, a young woman, likes to sit at the little table on the porch in the morning with her cup of tea, just as I love to sit on my balcony. They are among the few visible neighbours on the street and I think they moved in only a few months ago. You can live on this street for ages and never see the people who live in many of the houses. For a time, these residents had a sign up protesting the threatened Highland Companies Mega-Quarry development. Two doors down from them, the elderly couple are on their porch as they are so often, with guests today, chatting away. They have lived there half a century. And on our side of the street there are hordes of the co-op children out today at the other end of the building to where I am, spilling over the lawn as they rake tons of leaves up to the road and build a grand leaf pile ready to dive in at the agreed moment in the day. The leaf pile is a perfect mound, a good size for small children and slightly bigger ones. They are busy as bees at it, firing commands and ideas at one another, with the bigger boy, Matthew, as the gentle but clear, crew leader. The whole of their hearts and every one of their bones is in their play. Among the smaller ones are children who, I know, spend long hours in front of TVs and computers. But today they are mucking in with Matthew’s project and making a feast of it. The sight and sound of them all under the red, crackling leaves and the golden light of late afternoon, are balm to the soul. As a child, a thing I loved and remember most dearly was making leave-houses. Raking them into thick rows shaped into the rooms of houses, like an aerial view. Here is the living room, there is the kitchen and the bedrooms. Images of shelter and containment. I can’t remember who taught me the game. I think now that someone must have taught me as I can’t think why I did it and I think I always did it by myself.

For this brief moment I feel more at home in the universe than ever, flopped spontaneously on the grass by the door, hot after my walk. The sloping grass is silken and cool under my feet, the earth cool and comforting. Even with my daughter so far away. Even knowing that Tom and I spent those many hours talking and walking in England this summer, yet have hardly spoken since, I am keenly aware that if we are together some way, it is far more deeply within that knowledge itself; this moment, in shared consciousness, than in occasional jarring phone contact across vast distances. I know the peace of the perfect balance of absence and presence.

Shortly after when I’m inside, my daughter Skypes me and I am reminded again that it is the disruptive reachings across the distance that make the distances harder to bear. For this brief moment I feel more at home in the universe than ever, flopped spontaneously on the grass by the door, hot after my walk. The sloping grass is silken and cool under my feet, the earth cool and comforting.
Houses

Why did I not see houses? Walking in the early evening after a day of intense heat and some rain, with the air now pungent, circling the park twice to end my work hours and refresh flesh and mind, I infused myself with the heavenly summer solstice humid-heavy air, and passed the house across from the park where the garden brims in a chaotic English manner with thick masses of camellia and peony, that make you swoop down to cup the sprawling flowers in your hand and drink their perfume to the dregs. The perfume today, maddening. And passing this house which is really like a white Devon Cottage, semi-detached but huge, with the one side boasting this tremulously lush garden, and hungry, hungry for the sight and smell and shape of all the houses I passed with their wood piles and porches and wooden Muskoka chairs and flower pots, and the soft light coming through the windows, and smiling at dogs and at children and at the baseball games going on in the park and at the damp grass and hungry for the swinging of my limbs to the beat of this walking, and...seven years to the day (yesterday) of living here, I thought: Why then, did I not see houses?

Now I never get my fill of houses. These streets I walk each day are my feast of them, taking in the windows and the wood piles and the wicker chairs and the wooden porches and the spaces to feel space and have fireplaces in. And my hunger for them feels as though it will go on forever. And today I pass the white tall semi-detached Devon Cottage across from Exhibition Park and revel in its Eden, and: I think of Joan, who was my mother-in-law. Joan is who I think of as I drink in the pink camillias and the painted picture beauty of this garden. Now at the zenith moment of the summer solstice, Joan has begun to find her way past life, to another place. It is her I think of as the brilliant pink and rose peonies pour themselves off their dripping branches. And it comes in an instant, the knowing that this woman gave me beauty before and after everything. She gave me a garden for life.

My place has always been the edge of places; that is, the point/place where they end, dissolve, turn into something else or simply refuse identification or ‘placement.’ I am always deeply in and out of place; that is, where life meets death too.

The stars and sky are so lucid this night that sometimes when you have a walk in the dark the eve is young enough that people have not yet drawn their blinds and tonight you can see them all in their minute warmth and detail, scenes from a life in every window that I harken to. The two houses at the top of park, a tale of contrasts. The first is an image of teeming life, full of rough weeds and flowerbeds and chickens ranging and skateboard turf and tools and a swing in the huge old tree, and a wood pile; the one right beside it is blank outside with a flat perfect
lawn, and vertical venetian blinds slats slicing against the picture window, and not a thing or space out of place.

The ice in the park this afternoon makes me think of the scene in the film, *Sunshine* that I happened to see last night, and cried, where the Nazi is spraying freezing water on the Jewish man hung from a tree.

And the gifts of our life coming pouring in everyday.

Funny how Alexander celebrates small spaces. After returning to London after being here at Christmas, Hannah says on Skype one day how she misses ‘the little place’ (meaning our place here).

I’ve got it, about this question whether home goes in place or community. Well of course they all go within each other.

Home is surely not a house, a particular place...but is a progressive homology of body, dwelling, places that all alternately contain one another.

Walking round the park I realize...I am always realizing and knowing while I walk around the park; I have written this thesis walking around the park. This time walking around the park, I realize how deeply my experience of place has changed. I had the sense coming here in 2001 of how, though I was aware of ‘losing’ the beautiful place I was leaving, my guiding perspective had come to be, rather than about finding my perfect places to discover myself through them as when I was younger, it was now reversed (I can describe this to myself now much more clearly than then), to be more about me bringing who I am to where I am and working with it in mutual effect. It was a deep intuition more than anything certain, as I faced moving back to Ontario, a ‘land’ I no longer knew and felt profound ambivalence towards, an actual fear of loss of soul. What would I find there? And now, as I consider where I will next be and when (yes, one of the first things I realized after the big move back, was that no, maybe it was after all, not about forever, though at that time, it felt so much as if it was or ‘should be’...that was part of the mindset that had after all, brought me to it). I can see how when I envisage ‘gorgeous places’ that I once had purchase with or dreamed I would live or live again in—the West Coast/the Islands there and so on – I no longer see ‘stars,’ no longer see a potential self projected into them as when I was young and unformed, and who was anyway, not yet anywhere near being ‘on the ground.’ The kinds of beauty and idyllic cultures those places
represent are no longer things I seek as separated out of the totality of the world or my experience in time or space. It is no longer about temperate winters, the sea (though I miss water intensely), shangri-la food abundance and ‘alternative’ cultural activity, much as I still love all these things. It is now about that totality, about who I am in the place where I am and how I can create through it and what is my necessity within it; it is about the relationship, the process. Rather, any separated-out determinants about where to live now would be purely about practical or pre-emptive issues such as good reasons why I wouldn’t want to live in a particular place, if they were plain to see.

When I see bell hooks’ chapter title ‘returning to the wound’ in her 2009 book ‘Culture: a place of belonging,’ I know that exactly describes what I did and had to do in coming back here 10 years ago. She describes her reasons for returning to her Kentucky hills and there are many resonant themes in our lives. I love when she says Hence we return to the unforgettable homeplaces of our past with a vital sense of covenant and commitment and

Although I come from a long line of Kentucky country folk, farming men and women, I do not have the longed for green thumb but with a little [more than a little] help from my community, I am doing the work of self-healing, of earth healing, of reveling in this piecing together of my world in such a way that I can be whole and holy. (68)

What strikes me as I read her this morning, though struggling still with my relationship to place as an entire life-theme, is the realization that it is not just about being physically in a place but is as much if not more about how we are in place. Many people have been in one place all their lives but have never been involved in their ‘community’ whatsoever except variable contacts with immediate neighbours and friends who may have no connection to their locality. You could take their homestead, lift it up and plant it down anywhere and their lives would not intrinsically change even in terms of social connections. So this is the other side of the place story. It just underlines that living in place describes in truth a mode of engagement and attention.

This thesis is the place where I am able to become and be myself
It is in our power, with our technology, to create insanity in the larger systems of which we are parts. (Bateson, 1972, 466)

The term globalization, like the phenomenon it describes, needs to be stopped in its tracks, and arrested in the sweeping narrative which it inflicts without dialogue or engagement. I have ultimately come to sense it as a cold and obscuring notation that offers no way in to meaningful reflection, but rather seems to deflect meaning away from and around it. It is as if, no matter what the entry point, its force field will devour all position or articulation, because that's what it does. So though a main preoccupation over a long period of reflection has been, how does globalization mean, or how does it mobilize us imaginatively, my only conclusion is that it or our discourse around it, works exactly to paralyze or nullify meanings and to divert questions of meaning. Globalization is hegemony writ large. Beyond description of its mechanisms and impacts, already done variously by many (Appadurai, 2008[1996]; Bauman, 1998; Burawoy, et al., 2000; Giddens, 2000 [1999]; Massey, 1994, 2005; Sassen, 2007) and highlighted selectively here for points relevant to my concerns, there seems to remain only the challenge to stare down the term, and recover both the meanings it displaces or purports to displace such as our connection to place and so on, but more crucially to recover the historical forces and potentialities buried within its framing as a contemporary condition that can be parcelled off. In short, it nullifies meanings because it is a false description. I propose the reflections in this paper as a counternarrative to those of globalization, but further, in unravelling it as a false description, I wish to suggest how it might ultimately mean as the extension of historical forces that are dialectically repatterning our social formations towards new experiences and meanings of community.

I define the term globalization here as the redistribution of materials and forces across the globe in unprecedented ways and to unprecedented degrees. As a pattern of effects, I conceive globalization as the logical extension of unbounded capitalism. Given the capacity of technology, and lacking any ethical or political restraint on the capitalist market economy, where else could we end up but here? As the inevitable extension of the market economy, the reigning narrative of globalization would appear to be something ‘done to us’, beyond our choice or control. Bauman (1998) writes that words like globalization quickly turn into a no-questions-asked canon as modern civilization ceases to question itself (5). Yet as Bauman insists, asking the right questions is the difference between fate and destination. Altvater (1998) reminds us that only during the Fordist phase of capitalist development did the majority of humankind get integrated into global relations, via (in Marx’s terms) the real subsumption of nature and labour under the capitalist social form. This transition of a human economy embedded in social relations to one embedded,
perversely, in an economic system was an entirely new development beginning with the advent of the modern age and capitalism in Europe, and reaching maturity only during the Fordist mode of regulation. Up until the 19th century, 90% of the population was engaged in agriculture and the majority of economic activity was local or regional. The ‘global order’ encompassed the world that was known and accessible at the time. The capitalist world system developed during the last five centuries but the unitary world with its popular image of the blue planet earth and global ecosystem emerged only in the last few decades, since spaceship Apollo in the 60s made it possible to take photos of our planet. Only since then is the notion of a world order more than metaphorical. The post-war order of ‘world politics’ lasted only 50 years from 1945-89 when the fall of Berlin Wall brought an end to bipolarity and actual socialism (Alvater, 1998, 21). Now there appears no alternative to world domination by a market economy. Our relationship with nature is now global and demands global rules. As world domination by the market economy is finalized, our global ecosystems are in crisis.

Alvater

Alvater’s (1998) account in short, reminds us that globalization is a continuum. It began with the Neolithic revolution around 6000 BC, with its transition to agriculture and gender-specific specialization (men hunting, women tending plants and animals), along with a more intensive utilization of natural resources. The surplus resulting from increased labour activity allowed for social differentiation and also enabled expansion of trade within and among societies. Thus began production of commodities for exchange and the principle of equivalence became a norm, with eventually coins being produced. Production, distribution and storage of surplus became a source of power and privilege for elites in the city. This spawned a project of domination with exploitation of humans and nature, reminding us that the disregard for ecological limits is much older than industrial society. However, destruction was limited to local and regional levels, not global. From the late 18th century, the transition to fossil fuels, the technology of industrialization and expanding capitalist mode of production (social formation) created a quantum leap in the speed and reach of human activities, the ‘Promethean revolution’ (23). Since the discoveries of the 16th century and expansion across the Atlantic into the western hemisphere (combined with the disintegrating tendencies of other advanced groups, such as the Chinese and Indian empires), Europe became the hegemonic continent within the world system up until the 20th century. Then conflicts between nation-states culminated in two world wars, weakening even the victorious nations of Britain and France. From the mid-20th century until recently, global hegemony was in the hands of the U.S. The transformation of all conditions of life based on the availability of fossil fuels, saw social change and progress become the
norm, with the emergence of industrial society and the shift to a market economy, all supported by bourgeois revolutions in England, France and the U.S., with their associated breakthroughs for human rights and democratic principles. All this now seems the only possible principle for the relation between human and nature. Yet without fossil fuels, neither the process of capitalist production and accumulation nor the monetary world market could exist. Altvater (1998) reminds us that previously the ‘rules of money’ had been tamed by canonical or Islamic strictures which prohibited interest (30). Fossil fuels released production from the limits of biotic energy. As he asks, how else could billions of dollars be transferred from Hong Kong to London in seconds?

This ‘world order’ has developed along a North-South divide with the wealth of the North related to skilled labour, technical innovation, and the ability to compete in world markets rather than simply possession of resources (as in the 19th century), which now get stripped from the South increasing the prosperity of industrialized nations. All groups must continually conform to the benchmarks of the most successful in raising the standards of competition. The consequent overexploitation of renewable and non-renewable resources, and the associated threats to the habitats of species who cannot adapt quickly enough, have reached global proportions. Such historic-geographic imperialism compresses time so drastically that the capacity to adjust is reduced (28). Sustainability has been defined as essentially a balance between ecological carrying capacity and economic burden or alternately, in the terms that energy inputs from the sun must balance entropy (heat, sewage, waste, emissions, etc.), this being ultimately only achievable by solar strategy. Various approaches for achieving such sustainability have been proposed and dismissed. All have in common some form of conditionality on free trade. Ecological norms would be either controlled by nation states or international trade agreements monitored by an international institution. Alvater suggests that such regime formation inevitably would give rise to conflict among nation states. But beyond nation states, many cite the global civil society that has emerged through these same globalizing forces, including international institutions such as World Bank and IMF and also NGOs (also see Appadurai, 2008[1996]). These trends raise questions relating to state theory. A globalized economy outstrips the territory and people that are the basis of state sovereignty. But such limits to nation sovereignty, along with the incompatibility of the global economy with politics and ecology, means our environmental crisis cannot likely be resolved either by the global state or the nation state (Alvater, 1998, 36). Alvater proposes that we need intermediary institutions and organizations that act across class or group interests, that can weave connecting links within international networks and better articulate the interests of humanity. They can be the formal political expressions of the global ecological crisis, though there are many differences among them and their levels of influence. In short, new forms of social and
political forms of regulation remain to be found (Alvater, 1998, 39). These thoughts are echoed by Appadurai from a cultural perspective but envisioning the same prospect of transnational formations.

Appadurai

Appadurai’s (2008[1996]) account of cultural globalization emphasizes the new role of imagination in social life. That is, the imagination becomes a social practice, a form of work and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. As a framework for the tension between homogenization and heterogenization in today’s global interactions, he theorized five dimensions or scapes of global cultural flows (33-37) to describe what we now must see as the fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics, and which he sees as the building blocks of (extending Benedict Anderson) imagined worlds. Thus, ethnoscapes are the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, other moving groups and individuals who affect the politics of and between nations to an unprecedented degree. Technoscapes are the global configurations of technology, both mechanical and informational, now moving at high speeds across various previously impervious boundaries. These are increasingly driven not by any obvious economies of scale, of political control or of market rationality, but by increasingly complex relationships among money flows, political possibilities and the availability of highly skilled and un-skilled labour. Financescapes refers to the global economy which can still be described with reference to traditional indicators such as the World Bank, etc. but the new ethno- and technoscapes make these indicators and comparisons more and more out of reach of social sciences due to complex fiscal and investment flows across the globe. Mediascapes refer both to distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information and the images of the world created by these media. Ideoscapes are also images but often directly political and have to do with ideologies or counterideologies. Though there have always been such disjunctures as these, the increased speed, scale and volume of each now makes them central.

In terms of achieving a general theory of global cultural processes, Appadurai (2008[21996]) suggests we need new cosmopolitan cultural forms, a human version of chaos theory that asks, what are its dynamics (47)? He suggests we need a genuinely cosmopolitan ethnographic practice. Since, as he suggests, ‘cultural studies’ is the relationship between word and world (in the widest sense) words could be the basis for a cosmopolitan global ethnography. The task of this new ethnography then becomes: what is the nature of locality as a lived experience in a globalized, deterritorialized world (52)? Again, for
Appadurai, the answer lies in a new approach to the role of imagination in social life. He cites the importance for this ethnography of embedding larger-scale realities in concrete life-worlds, and the possibility of divergent interpretations of ‘locality.’ Appadurai (2008[1996]) further emphasizes our need to think ourselves beyond the nation. Modern nation-states share collective experience not of face-to-face contact or subordination to a royal person, but of reading books, pamphlets, newspapers, maps and other modern texts together (print capitalism/electronic capitalism). Thus, citizens imagine themselves to belong to a national society, less out of natural facts – language, blood, soil, and race – and more out of cultural product of the collective imagination. These natural facts reactivate the trope of the tribe, largely because there are no forceful alternatives to it yet (161). The nation-state is preoccupied with control, classification and surveillance of its subjects, thus creating, revitalizing or fracturing ethnic identities that were previously fluid, negotiable or nascent. Most nations crystallized only in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Thus, it becomes clear that nationalism and ethnicity feed each other. Minorities in many parts of the world are as artificial as the majorities they seem to threaten. So, though many of these can revolve around images of homeland, soil, place, these cannot capture the nature of all these conflicts. However, no idiom has yet emerged to express these collective interests. Appadurai stresses that we are still trapped in the linguistic imaginary of the territorial state. It means ethnic tensions are then forced by this logic to become ‘antinational’ or ‘antistate’ and so it becomes a vicious circle (166). We need a new language to capture the complex, nonterritorial, postnational forms of allegiance. Analogous to chaos theory, the world has become not only unipolar (since the Cold War ended) but multicentric, in the way that local and global processes affect each other outside of the nation-state rubric.

As examples of these complexities, Appadurai (2008[1996]) cites the variety of organizations, movements, ideologies, multinational corporations, such as Habitat for Humanity, international terrorist organizations, international fashion, Green movements, and world of refugees. Refugees are no longer just residual or floating between nation-states, but a permanent part of an emergent postnational order. Further, even groups of Christian philanthropy, such as World Vision, are blurring boundaries between evangelical, developmental and peace-keeping functions. The Olympic movement is one of these many postnational sites and formations emerging. These groups are organized around principles of finance, recruitment, coordination, communication, and reproduction that are fundamentally postnational, not multinational or international. The traditional multinational corporation is a bit misleading because it relies on nation-state structure, while maximizing opportunities within and across national structures, always exploiting their legitimacy. The new organizational forms are more diverse and fluid, with many explicitly constituted to monitor activities of the nation-state, such as Amnesty International, groups attached to the UN, or Oxfam
(outside the UN network), a prime example of the growth of NGOs in many parts of the developing world. These are major grassroots self-help groups that convey a sense of the limited capacity of national governments to deliver basics of life in places such as India. Other examples are groups we often call fundamentalist such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Unification Church and any other Christian, Hindu, or Muslim organizations.

In the emerging postnational world, diaspora runs with and not against the grain of identity, movement and reproduction. Diaspora is now the order of things, while settled ways of life are increasingly hard to find. Appadurai (2008[1996]) suggests that the U.S. is suited to be a cultural laboratory for the circulation and testing of ideas for a world organized around diasporic diversity and wonders if a postnational politics can be built around such developments. This would see for instance, the material problems we face, the things we really care about, become the ideas we live and die for, driven by *more humane motives of affiliation* rather than the abstraction of citizenship (176). These many existing and potential new sovereignties might include queer nation, retired, unemployed, disabled, scientists, women, Hispanics; many of these are inherently postnational. He acknowledges that though these emerging transnationalities contain elements of a postnational imaginary, these require both nurture and critique to engender actually existing postnational movements, organizations and spaces.

In these postnational spaces, the incapacity of the nation-state to tolerate diversity (as it seeks the homogeneity of its citizens, the simultaneity of its presence, the consensual nature of its narrative, and the stability of its citizens) may, perhaps, be overcome. (177)

Appadurai views locality as primarily relational and contextual rather than scalar or spatial: a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by links between sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts, and expressed in certain kinds of agency, sociality and reproducibility. In contrast, *neighbourhood*, he defines as the actually existing social forms in which locality, as a dimension or value of social life, is realized; neighbourhoods are situated communities, whether spatial or virtual, with potential for social reproduction. With a view to ‘locating the subject,’ he first corrects any clichéd assumptions we may have about locality to emphasize that it is actually an inherently fragile social achievement which is constantly produced and must be maintained against various kinds of odds which are differently conceptualized. For instance, in many societies, boundaries are danger zones which require ritual maintenance. For others, social relations are inherently divisive. For many societies, houses and inhabited spaces are forever shifting. Appadurai asserts that we therefore need to rewrite or invert the ethnographic record based on this recognition. He sees much of what we call ‘rites
of passage’ as concerned with production of we can call ‘local subjects.’ That is, ceremonies of naming and various body practices serve as techniques for inscribing locality onto bodies, or put differently, they are ways to embody locality as well as to locate bodies in socially and spatially defined communities. Though this spatial symbolism is paid less attention than the social and symbolic symbolism, it is what in fact produces ‘natives.’ In this way, as he elaborates the argument, the building of houses, organization of paths and pathways, making and remaking of fields and gardens, mapping and negotiation of transhuman spaces and hunter-gatherer terrains and all other techniques for the spatial production of locality, can be reconceived as moments in a general technology and teleology of localization (Appadurai, 1996[2008], 180).

Appadurai (1996[2008]) cites the need for a framework for relating the global, national and local which needs to consider factors such as how the nation-state nationalizes space under its sovereignty. Almost any kind of nation poses the same set of challenges to production of neighbourhoods by local subjects. They exist principally to incubate and reproduce compliant national citizens, not for production of local subjects. They represent anxieties for the nation-state as they usually contain large or residual spaces where the techniques of nationhood are weak or contested, yet they are also indispensable. They need to be policed almost as much as borders. So the work of producing neighbourhoods is often at odds with the project of the nation-state. They also often aim to contrast with other neighbourhoods so may contradict the national imperative for spatial and social standardization.

A further challenge is the growing disjuncture between territory, subjectivity and collective social movement. Human motion is now more definitive of social life than the exception. All kinds of work, circulation of refugees (political or environmental), and lure of economic opportunity, mean that the people-production needs of one state can mean ethnic and social unrest for its neighbours. Semi-permanent refugee camps mean the starkest conditions for producing any kind of locality; these are extreme examples of being context-driven rather than context-generative. In general, displaced, deterritorialized populations, which, combined with state policies that restrict neighbourhoods as context-producers, result in local subjects who cannot be anything other than national citizens. Yet the bright side, he claims, is that the very nature of these urban dramas drives people to peaceful locations bringing their skills and passion for peace.

Finally, there is the factor of the growing disjuncture between spatial and virtual neighbourhoods, which he believes has both utopian and dystopian potentials. There are the new connections between producers, audiences and publics (local and national, stable and diasporic); virtual neighbourhoods are bounded only
by access to necessary software and hardware. The relationship between spatialized and virtual
neighbourhoods can’t be seen too quickly as simply opposed. The virtual can mobilize ideas, opinions,
money, social linkages, and support for highly localized positions, directly back into lived
neighbourhoods. Diaspora can bring efforts to reorganize diasporic politics locally. The virtual becomes a
new element in the production of locality. Global flow of images, news and opinion provides engaged
cultural and political literacy. Against the largely negative pressures of nation-state, electronic mediation
allows a more complicated, hybrid sense of local subjectivity in the diasporic community. Even less
privileged diaspora have access to more transnational media products (e.g. newspapers, cassettes, etc.) So
for Appadurai, the work of the imagination through which local subjectivity is produced is a bewildering
palimpsest of highly local and translocal considerations. Locality can thus be seen as fragile in two senses:
its vulnerability to the corrosion of context with the tendency of the material world to resist human
agency; its vulnerability to the context-producing drives of more complex hierarchical organizations such
as the nation-state. The relationship between these two fragilities is itself historical. That is, the long-term
interaction of neighbourhoods is what creates these hierarchical relations/state formation, etc. This
historical dialectic reminds us that locality is not a transcendent standard but always emergent from the
practices of local subjects in specific neighbourhoods. The task now is of theorizing the relationship
between these new disjunctures and conjunctures.

Sassen

Appadurai’s (2008[1996]) discussion is far-ranging and explores beyond his discipline, if it is also
impressionistic and jargon-heavy. Sassen’s (2007) sociological analysis of globalization is very precisely
within both her discipline and its conceptual vocabulary, though she also contributes methodical
descriptions that help illuminate the sites she depicts, particularly her conception of global cities. She
subjects what she calls the master image or narrative of globalization to various challenges and speaks into
its gaps. Her key message appears to be that the national and the global are not simply mutually exclusive.
Though aspects of power and sovereignty of the nation-state are impacted, they are in fact the site of many
of the structures that specifically constitute and produce the global economy. Especially in global cities,
these structural networks are clustered to equip the global extensions of markets and organizations. They
constitute a grid of global cities which overlays the map of nation-states and across which global flows
move. These global cities are sites in which the embeddedness of private electronic space entails the
formation of massive concentrations of infrastructure and a complex interaction between digitization and
more situated transactions, which are much more subject to state authority. Her notion of global cities
captures this particular embeddedness of global finance in actual financial centres. So global digitized finance is not simply an overriding of national state authority; that authority is used to implement regulations and laws relating to the interests of global finance. Global finance is also embedded in these financial centres. So, crucially, the state is engaged in implementing global processes rather than being a victim of them. Sassen (2007) thus reads in this, given this embeddedness of the global in the national, that the state could conceivably be involved in many more ways than just its present focus on furthering economic globalization, including addressing the democratic deficit in the multilateral system governing globalization and how these possibilities are either reinforced or selected against by the structures of the state (56-57).

A key implication is that the global economy has to be produced and reproduced, serviced and financed and is not just a heightening of interdependence or a function of multinational corporations and financial markets. It demands highly complex functions that cannot be contained in corporate headquarters and must be produced within the strategic sites of global cities. Its topography moves between digital space and national territories. This requires many policy and narrative negotiations in state sovereignty, usually coded as ‘deregulation’, yet there is much more to it than this concept captures. It is a frontier zone that produces new institutional forms, not just reducing regulations but a thickening of regulations in order to accommodate need for autonomous central banks and to delink them from the influence of government and from national political agendas. So in truth some state functions are raised, such as those that will provide secure environment for capital, whereas the power of the welfare system might be reduced. So, Sassen (2007) wonders, do these developments represent a new form of state authority, that entails a partial denationalizing of the state, and that is neither fully public nor fully private, and which might for instance, contain private agendas inside a domain represented as public? (77)

Sassen’s analysis also is concerned to emphasize how immigrants, especially women and low-paid workers of various kinds, are performing many of the local tasks on which this global work depends, but this is masked by and subsumed within the old historical discourse of immigration, rather than being identified as an essential part of globalization. She also discusses questions around the internet and digitization of communication and information and whether reigning assumptions about its boundary-crossing and immunity to regulation are really true. Digitization is deeply caught up with other dynamics that shape its development and use. We must resist purely technological readings of the capacities involved and recognize the embeddedness of digital space. She explains that there are both national authorities and an international body that delimits the boundaries or provides for their implementation if
needed. Further, many of the global transactions that take place occur within private regions of the internet. There is debate about whether it can be governed at all.

If master images of globalization circulated by Appadurai and others emphasize hypermobility, global communications and neutralization of place and distance, Sassen (2007) stresses that these capabilities need to be produced. This perspective shifts the emphasis to the practises that constitute this, and so recovers categories of place and production process, especially as they are constituted in major cities, which we easily slide past under the rhetoric of globalization. This allows us to see the concrete, localized practices, multiple economies and work practices that are part of the global economy though not usually marked as such (those who hold the ‘other’ jobs). In turn we are able to examine the possibility of new forms of inequality arising from economic globalization. The related focus on cities allows the specification of a new transnational geography of strategic places (she calls this a new geography of centrality (98). She wonders if this is also the space for a new transnational politics (as per Massey, 2005; Alvater, 1998; Appadurai, 2008 [1996]). So the city can once again become a lens through which to examine processes that unsettle existing arrangements.

There is a new sociospatial order in global cities. The urban moment is one moment in a larger process but it is more susceptible to empirical study in ways that other phases are not. This perspective posits the city not as bounded unit but as a complex structure that can articulate cross-boundary processes and reconstitute them as a partly urban condition. In scalar hierarchy then, it is not below national, regional and global levels, but is one of the spaces of the global (Sassen, 2007, 101). Focus on the city also cuts across the assumption that the nation-state is the container of social processes. Rather it moves us beyond the old idea of city as a bounded site to recover the multiplicity of presences in this landscape as the strategic site for a range of new operations – political, economic, cultural and subjective. Thus, there is the possibility for new forms of power and politics at a subnational level, produced by loss of power at the national level: a geography of politics that links subnational spaces across borders (105). This can give rise to a new type of transnational politics that localizes in cities. Sassen cites immigration as one major process constituting this transnational political economy, both at the macro level of global labour markets and at the micro level of translocal household survival strategies, again mostly in larger cities. It can be seen as one of the constitutive processes of globalization, and the city as one of the key sites for researching this. We can wonder how it might be otherwise, I would add, in contexts where state controls prevent context-generative localities as cited by Appadurai above or otherwise affect de-politicization of the population.
Burawoy

Burawoy, et al. (2000) further critique the existing discourse around globalization noting that, though some sociologists such as Sassen have made gestures towards a more grounded ethnography, anchoring global dynamics to the service workers in ‘global cities’, the global remains largely invisible within them. A key question for them was whether globalization had rendered ethnography (apparently fixed in the local) impossible or even irrelevant. They found the reverse – that ethnography’s concern with concrete, lived experience can sharpen the abstractions of globalization theories into more precise and meaningful conceptual tools (xiv). They found that even its bleak theories seemed to call to the ethnographer, since globalization is about the recomposition of time and space, and ethnographers work is the study of others in their space and time (4). They decided to look at it in three slices: transnational forces, flows or connections, and discourse or imaginations. They found it meant rethinking the meaning of fieldwork, making it flexible enough to accommodate the time-space coordinates of their subjects, and to combine dwelling with travelling (where anthropology would by convention privilege dwelling).

Like the preceding theorists, Burawoy and his colleagues note that as civil society loses its influence over the state, it turns outward, developing transnational connections. Dense ties that once connected civil society to the state are being detached and redirected across national boundaries to form a thickening global public sphere. Yet these connections and flows are still shaped by the strong magnetic field of nation states. Hence these researchers are still cautious about the disappearance of the nation-state, though they do see things changing. They want to specify what is new about the global, what distinguishes the global postmodern from the familiar global imperialism from which it is emerging; what does hegemony mean at the global level? They aimed instead to develop perspectives on globalization from below, grounded globalizations, ascending from the local to the global by stitching together their ethnographies (341). This enables us to see how globalization is upheld and reproduced, or challenged and transformed. They observed that politically, the world of interacting nation states is transformed by relations that move above and below the nation; above the nation, the global mobilizes rather than silences difference, while under the nation, the local reclaims its own historicity. Culturally, they note the emergence of hybrid, recombinant, often fragile identities, which supplant the former essentialist categories such as nation, race, class and gender. Concrete (economic) examples include how Pittsburgh moved from being a steel city to a global city and how it worked well, but met local opposition from local service-sector unions, organized around local interests and identities. They cite political examples, where, for instance, former authoritarian states are replaced by weak liberal democracies which encourage global invasions of civil society. This

They found these displacements and transitions uneven across the globe, whether within or across national boundaries. They see this as globalization in transition and as a world without a grand narrative, where hegemony cannot be overthrown by either revolution or violence, but through wars of position where multiple groups with many identities weave together around universal interests such as human rights or environmental justice, creating movements not outside the hegemonic order but on its terrain. They assert that grounded globalizations call for grounded politics and a new cosmopolitanism from below. Globalization cannot be reduced to an inexorable force; it is a process in which we participate, a process embedded in imaginations which we construct.

Massey

Massey (2005) refutes the nostalgic responses to globalization that assume these bounded internally coherent ‘places’/nation-states, which she claims never existed. Rather these notions, she claims, are stories about space that legitimize imperialism and are the basis for modernist universalization, and, she claims, are largely endorsed by social sciences. We need to challenge outright the assumptions of isomorphism of space/place/culture. For instance, anthropology places those who are observed in a different time than the ‘Time of the observer.’ Observation of the other from our time is central to a particular form of power and knowledge (70). This attitude is still a constant feature of political cosmologies and amounts to a taming and repression of the spatial, which is bound up with the establishment of foundational universals and the geography of power and knowledge. Arrival from the margins (a spatial concept) to centre is a threat. She sees our image of globalization as unbounded space as imposing a similar conceptualization of space as modernity, that is, seen as inevitable, despatialized, almost like a grand narrative. This is a spatial view of globalization. She stresses that all this seeming ‘inevitability’ is achieved by the unquestioned motors of economy and technology where these are protected from political questioning (82-83). She cites this version of globalization as another ‘one story’, like capitalism. In truth, globalization is not a single all-embracing movement spread from the west and economic centres across passive space. It is a project of its own, legitimizing, like modernity, its own production of poverty, legitimizing structural adjustments in the South. It is all about free trade, yet not free movement or migration. It is told as a universal story but cannot be universalized.
Massey (2005) further unsettles our given assumptions about globalization. For instance, environmentalists want to think of nature as firm ground on which the mobilities of technology and culture can play, but seen properly, ‘globalization from below’ really is that. There is no cut-off point; rather the planet has always been a global mobility. We imagine local as the product of global but neglect the local construction of the global, so that place is figured as a victim of globalization. But different places are related differently to the global, and not always constituted as a politics against globalization. She suggests that our tendency to exonerate the local must be challenged, as well as the tendency to identify capitalism with the global, which leads to a lack of addressing the constitution of the local itself. So the local is implicated in the production of the global. This challenges the persistent metaphorical ‘geography of resistance’ posited by De Certeau (which she cites in her extensive critique of him as spatial fetishism) and points to a politics of specificity: local-global politics structured differently place to place (as opposed to the WTO’s notion of universally fair free trade rules and likewise opposed to argument against free trade which she sees as similarly inadequate) (103). Indeed, Massey cites the need for a debate over the purpose and form of globalization.

Where we tend to experience it as given, as objective presence, she cites places as an ever-shifting constellation of trajectories, citing the example of the migrant rock in Hamburg (151). We need to theorize space and place as the product of social relations, conflict and things. Further, the closure of identity in a territorializing space of bounded places is not conducive to radical politics. We can see ourselves as place-based rather than place-bound, and recognize the global to be as concrete as the local. The lived reality of our lives is dispersed. For instance, she cites mediated relations as just as authentic and important as unmediated, face- to- face ones. Her argument is that space as much as place is concrete, grounded, real, and lived. The global is not out there or up there (185). The rhetorics of material juxtaposition and of territory work against this, even amidst rhetoric of far-flung connectivity. Our formal politics is also organized territorially.

Massey also queries our cultural obsession with parent-child relationships and the focusing of the question of care within family relations, in her concern to counter our association of care with proximity. She cites the constructedness of these attitudes evidenced by their cultural variability. Thus she critiques the insistence of our Russian-doll (tied to preoccupation with size) geography of ethics, care and responsibility, which moves from home to local place to nation, in a hegemony of care for the nearest first. This persists, she points out, even as migration and cyberspace networks disrupt the geography of any automatic relations between social and physical distance. This implies the localization of ethical
commitment at the very moment of our increasing expansive interconnectedness. She poses then, the important question, must ‘groundedness’ and the search for a situated ethics in a relational and globalized spatiality, remain tied to the notion of the local? Perhaps it is not ‘place’ that is missing, but grounded practical connectedness (Massey, 2005, 187). In a globalized world, that kind of connection is not confined within place.

Buber (1992, 2002) proposes that in a fledgling culture there is often a strong link between ethics and music, and between cosmology and architecture. He asserts that the division of realms heralds the disintegration of the culture, which then tends to move towards re-establishment of the original unity. Through these accounts we can derive how globalization, that is, historical forces themselves, are confronting us with new convergences of work, place, and economy in ways that heighten and renew consciousness of their meanings and iterate the direction of change and recovery: workers and activists can enact community both in their displaced/places and across transnational networks that engage with issues of work, identity, power, and place with ‘others’ across the globe. Such contexts can be conceptualized as giving rise to community (as both means and end) as necessity (as per Buber). I will expand on this theorization regarding the significance of globalization for community in the concluding section.
Man overheard talking to his friend at the next table, October 2011:

Talking about ‘his rabbi, Jesus...’ His critique of the church: \textit{God pulled us out kicking and screaming from empire... this is where he wants us to be. When we were in empire we were in collusion with governments. Now we’re remnants of our former selves, we’re persecuted, and God can work with us in this state; so now... we’re wondering and wandering. There is a generation raised in empire, who still need to be cared for but also the awareness that these will die away, in the desert in a matter of time.}

\textit{Because we’re locked in with empire, we expect pay, we expect pensions and benefits...When there is no ground, no source for what we do or how we act, then it can be dangerous. Empire tells you what the ground is, but if only we could tell people...this (God/religion) is the ground that sustained people for millennia...}

Then they spoke about the Dao and Buddhist podcasts (religious classics). He said for the Buddhist there is no kernel after peeling away the layers, just perfect emptiness is kernel of truth. His idea is that kernel is within rather than outside of us: \textit{The Gospel of John suggests it is inside us, a wellspring within us that will burst to overflowing at some point. The Dao of our life is to get back from being the carved block to the uncarved block, to nothingness. A Jewish person won’t even name god, they can’t even say it.}
If I am asked finally to define my own position, I would say this. I believe in the necessary economic struggle of the organized working class. I believe that this is still the most creative activity in our society, as I indicated years ago in calling the great working-class institutions creative cultural achievements, as well as the indispensable first means of political struggle. I believe that it is not necessary to abandon a parliamentary perspective as a matter of principle, but as a matter of practice I am quite sure that we have to begin to look beyond it ... I think that no foreseeable parliamentary majority will inaugurate socialism unless there is a quite different kind of political activity supporting it....involv(ing) the most active elements of community politics, local campaigning, specialized interest campaigning ... I believe that the system of meanings and values which a capitalist society has generated has to be defeated in general and in detail by the most sustained kinds of intellectual and educational work. This is a cultural process which I called the long revolution ... a genuine struggle which was part of the necessary battles of democracy and of economic victory for the organized working class. People change, it is true, in struggle and by action. Anything as deep as a dominant structure of feeling is only changed by active new experience. But this does not mean that change can be remitted to action otherwise conceived. On the contrary the task of a successful socialist movement will be one of feeling and imagination quite as much as one of fact and organization.

(Raymond Williams, 1989, 75)
In view of the social and ecological crises we face, how can we engender conditions for a life-affirming, vital, and sustainable culture? Do our approaches to change too often recapitulate many of the ills of our culture – lacking analysis of social processes, taking at face value the sentimentalized notions of family and community fed to us by the media, failing to account for questions of meaning and power in social groups, communicating through forums that reach only the converted, acting in isolation, dealing with symptoms and not getting to the root of things, failing our own deep creativity in favour of the logical and discursive? Perhaps our work lies in revising these approaches and, further, questioning what it is we are actually seeking. Buber (1930 [2002]) writes: *The social life of our time demands too little; does too little to humanize the entire social life* (257).

Part Two foregrounds our commonly shared ideas of culture, community, creativity and the individual, to both unsettle and renew our grasp of these terms and processes and their emergent possibilities. I begin deliberately at the macrocosm of culture and community and work towards the individual because our historical moment in the West is oriented to individualism, which has many implications for our global crises. How do we understand the term creativity, and how do we impoverish our personal and cultural capacities when we banalize its meanings, and how can their recovery help us vision anew? Raymond Williams’ illuminating account clarifies culture as a process involving creativity and communication as ongoing, mutually constitutive processes that build up culture. This is followed by questioning and revisioning of the notion of community incorporating the thought of Martin Buber, Jean-Luc Nancy, Murray Bookchin and others, and aimed at revisioning the process of community as the art and work of human life and as a counternarrative and dialectical outcome of globalization. There follows a section on the emergence of our notion of the individual through Raymond Williams’ account, and extending into further analysis around hegemonic forces in our culture through the lens of the individual. A section on concerns of the individual and social life in our historical moment draws on the work of D.W. Winnicott, Anthony Giddens, Gabor Mate and others, to reveal the role of creative and healing modalities and developmental insights in the recovery of a culture of care.
Raymond Williams on Culture, Creativity and Communication

Raymond Williams (1961, 1989) describes culture as the whole way of life of a community or group of communities or nation. Williams was one of the founding fathers of cultural studies, a field at first very much outside the university and oriented to the concerns of ‘ordinary’ people for reshaping dominant institutional practices (Rodman, 2010). Williams, so particularly and from within the materiality of his own time and place (Britain from the 50s through the 80s), was able to illuminate the process of culture, yielding relevance for all human communities. What is the value of such a ‘story?’ I see it as a giving ourselves back to ourselves, at once re-storing (or re-storying) and re-contextualizing our creativity back from the segregated idea of ‘art’ into the very nature of our existence, and our individuality as indivisible from the collective, with which we interact in ongoing mutually constitutive processes. To re-member how culture happens, to register the frames which we are so inescapably always inside, gives us a wider perspective for approaching the urgent questions of our time regarding human and planetary well-being. Through Williams’ writings, we also gain a strong historical sense of the cultural shifts leading to our own moment and about our varying relations to the cultures in which we partake. Raymond Williams wrote in 1958:

We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life – the common meanings; to mean the arts and learning – the special processes of discovery and creative effort. Some writers reserve the word for one or other of these senses; I insist on both, and on the significance of their conjunction. The questions I ask about our culture are questions about our general and common purposes, yet also questions about deep personal meanings. Culture is ordinary, in every society and in every mind. (1989 [1958], 4)

Williams (1989) had emerged from a Welsh community where work, learning and the arts were one, where ‘neighbour’ still meant that when his father was dying, one neighbour came and dug his garden; another loaded and delivered a lorry of sleepers for firewood; another came and chopped the sleepers into blocks; another left a sack of potatoes at the back door; a woman came in and took away a basket of washing (9). Though he happened to go on to Cambridge University, he did not view this as any fundamental separation from the life of his community, in which learning was ordinary; we learned where we could (5). It was the prohibitive cost, pretense and separation between education and ordinary people, and the labelling of ‘ignorant masses’ that he found there, which were of concern to him. He said there are in fact no masses, only ways of seeing people as masses, such as the social change that emerged with the coming of industrialism gathering people into towns, so that suddenly we were constantly seeing
people we did not know..., and such as the new divide between transmitter and audience with the new communications (Williams, 1989, 11). He refused however, to accept the claim of cause and effect between popular education (allowing the masses in) and the emerging commercial culture that so many disdained.

Likewise he refused to accept the state of this popular culture as a guide to the mind and feeling of the ordinary working people he knew, among them his own family, even though they may engage in this culture and it was so easy to assume the link. He knew such assumptions had to be closely examined, even if he noted his surprise at observing how people whose quality of personal living is high are apparently satisfied by a low quality of printed feeling and opinion. Rather, he raised the thought (astutely, perhaps prophetically and has anyone taken it up?): Clearly there is something in the psychology of print and image that none of us has yet quite grasped (13). In the face of England’s official, elitist culture and its opposition to the working class and to democracy, Williams stated that our central social problem in the coming decades was the use of our new resources to make a good common culture; the means to a good, abundant economy we already understand (10).

Winter (2010) writes that Williams, in developing a critical and emancipatory version of culture, wanted to create knowledge which could be used by groups working against social injustice for solving urgent social, political and economic problems, in a ‘long revolution’ of transformative work for what Williams called ‘knowable communities’ (46-47). Williams’ conceptions of culture and education emphasized the agency of every individual in the production and transformation of culture as a material practice (Horak and Seidl, 2010). If at first his definition of culture emphasized shared meanings, by the 70s he had incorporated Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony into his work on culture (Storey, 2010). In his teaching, theorizing and personal engagement, he was concerned to act on the knowledge that hegemony must continually be produced and cannot exhaust the human energies and practices represented by the dominant order (Winter, 2010). Culture must be understood to include this totality of energies. William’s incorporation of the notion of hegemony enabled his work to evolve towards making fuller connections between cultural signification and power, that is, the fact that we are made by meanings attributed by others as much as we make meanings (Storey, 2010).

A central category in Williams’ work relating to culture is that of ‘structure of feeling.’ He worked to determine this feature in culturally-documented phenomena whether poems, buildings or clothing, as microcosms of the whole. Such a notion is clearly resonant with Bateson’s sense of the pattern that connects when we read that structure of feeling is a shared set of ways of thinking and feeling.
demonstrating regular patterns, which forms and is formed by the whole way of life, the whole lived culture of an epoch, class or group (Horal and Seidl, 2010, 9). Ultimately, structure of feeling can be seen as belonging to the realm of emergence and creativity, because it refers to the gap between experience and the discursive, the known and the knowable, the unsettling in the relation between signifier and signified (Winter, 2010). Storey (2010) cites the central significance in Williams’ work of the connection he makes between culture and signification, the way he saw culture as a realized signifying system. He sees Williams’ work as positing that signification saturates the social, even where in certain activities it is more overshadowed by more functional aspects (eg. plumbing), than in say, poetry. Storey (2010) suggests that the significance of Williams’ definition is that, though reality exists outside culture, it is only through culture that the world can be made to mean....signification has a performativ effect; it helps construct the realities it appears only to describe (40). The extension of this is that the sign can be made to mean different things in different contexts. Indeed, Grossberg (2010) notes how Williams’ work, with its emphasis and often ambivalence around the categories of culture and of experience, takes us into the territory of the complex relationship between the epistemological and the ontological, between consciousness and the world. These concerns draw comparison with Bateson’s (1972, 2002[1979]) preoccupation with reconciling the epistemological and ontological, and the effects of our use and distortions of language and the importance of metaphor. I am concerned here with how Williams’ work shows strong affinity and implications for our contemporary social movements and clearly anticipates our current ecological and political concerns in the face of neo-liberal globalization (Winter, 2010; Klaus, 2010). His implied commitment to a radical contextuality is an invaluable model for any impulses for social change and echoes the emphasis placed on context in Bateson and Buber’s thinking (Grossberg, 2010, 20). His vision of a common culture, his emphasis on culture as a network of shared and contested meanings, his vision of hegemony as always dominant but never total or exclusive, along with his notions of dominant, residual and emergent forces in culture, furnishes us with positive tools to work actively and hopefully within our own culture-producing contexts. Surely a vital, sustainable culture is a common, democratic one.

Williams’ (1961) ‘long revolution’ encompassed the democratic, economic and cultural revolutions of the century he lived in, emerging in the 60s (xii). He saw it as massive but gradual and indefinable except as it unfolded, and bearing impacts we could not know. These concerns followed on from those expressed in his previous book Culture and Society. He posited complex interactions between the democratic and industrial revolutions and their extension in the realm of communications and the effects of all of these on everything from family to art and entertainment. Though he saw a great deal of energy going into the
criticizing of this ‘long revolution,’ in giving it this name he is trying to assent to it, and finds the values and meanings he needs are all to be found within the very process of change. Democracy, industry and extended communication could be conceived as means rather than ends, implying their revolutionary character, and new ways of thinking and feeling, along with new conceptions of relationships. His inquiry into the nature of creative activity is approached as the necessary basis for extending an account of the relationship between communication and community.

**Culture as creation**

Williams (1961) chronicles a change in the meaning of ‘creative’ and ‘imagination’ during the Renaissance, and then during Romanticism via the theories of Sidney (*Apologie for Poetrie*, 1595) and Shelley (*Defence of Poetry*, 1840). Coleridge (Biographia Literaria, 1817; Notebooks, 1895) extended this meaning beyond the reserve of the poet to be related to the nature of all perception. This took the transformation of imitative theories (Aristotle’s *Poetics*; Plato’s *Republic/Ion*) to creative theories to the next critical stage, carrying forward from the beginning of the 18th century. In our time, creativity has been seen as 1) either simple realism, imitation or ‘organization of reality’ (Shelley’s synthesis) or 2) with the dawn of psychology with Freud (New Introductory Lectures, 1933) and Jung (Modern Man in Search of a Soul, 1933[1959]), creativity took on the claim of a reality beyond our reach, via the unconscious. For Freud, the material of art was fantasy, opposed to reality. For Jung, creativity implied either intense psychological or else visionary sources with the artist as a gifted personality embodying this ‘impersonal creative process.’ So now this ordinarily inaccessible reality is inside man, with the artist able to penetrate it. So what is ‘creative,’ Williams (1961) asks (16)? It must be grasped in terms of perception. There is ordinary perception and one that transcends that. So the product of everyday perception would be seen as (what we think of as) ‘reality.’ The artist’s perception would be seen to affect an alternate organization/idealization/transcendence of this reality. This is so built into our thinking now that it is hard to evaluate. But we create the world we see: Reality as we experience it is a human creation as sourced by 1) the evolving human brain and, 2) cultural interpretations, which give us ‘rules’ or models with which we ‘create’ the world. Thus we can also create new areas of reality by altering or extending these rules. But to end this duality between reality and art, we have to see, knowing what we now know about perception, that all human experience is an interpretation of the non-human reality (20). Human experience is both subjective and objective in one whole process.
Williams (1961) cites sources (citing Young, Conjectures on Original Composition, 22) from radical biology of the time that emphasizes the continuous process of creation as a rhythmic succession over time of two general laws of the universe: the tendency for random processes to link/bind/organize into larger units, and then for this unity to dissolve again into fresh randomness. In this way, all species remain in balance with their surroundings, and life maintains communication with the non-living world. This applies likewise to growth of the human brain and organization of our species. But beyond this that we share with creatures and their instincts, for us this continual process of learning and relearning/organizing and reorganizing made possible by social organization and tradition, is of course, as per above, the reorganization of reality. So in this real sense, humankind is a creator. This has led to a number of complex communication-systems such as language, music, and math. We tend to treat them as separate systems, but based on our knowing that consciousness is part of the reality and vice versa, we must see them as a whole in being related parts of this whole human process of social learning. Coleridge called this intuition of the whole ‘substantial knowledge’, even though the process it grasps is the common form of our ordinary living (highest form of human organization). At the less organized level, we fall back on ‘abstract knowledge’ (separation of mind and nature, subject and object, art to science, etc.) As Williams (1961) puts it,...so much of our thinking rests on these false divisions that to grasp the substantial unity, the sense of a whole process, is to begin a long and difficult revolution in the mind (22-23).

With theories of art that separate ‘artist’ and ‘reality’ now recognized as obsolete, Williams cites the need for new definitions of art. As he puts it, we see by learning to describe so that seeing is related to communication in a fundamental way. We have many ways of describing – by learned rules (conventional descriptions) and by certain responses such as gesture, image, language, which we often literally feel ourselves creating as we struggle to describe new information/things/relationships, or meanings, for which conventional descriptions are inadequate. This vital descriptive effort and way of seeing is not just the activity of artists or art. The very history of language exemplifies this process and the ways in which it evolves and changes. And these new communications are carried out by more than artists. So what we call art is one of a number of ways of describing and communicating and most arts are developments of ways commonly used, such as the way dance arises from gesture, poetry from speech. So we can best understand the arts through this vital relationship between describing and communicating: experience has to be described to be realized, this description being in fact, putting the experience into a communicable form/and then has, as per biological purpose of the description, to be shared (1961, 24, my paraphrasing).
The arts then are distinguished by a powerful means of this sharing, though again these means are mostly developments from general communication. Rhythm is one obvious example, Williams (1961) cites – a way of transmitting a description of experience, such that the experience is re-created in the person receiving it, as an actual physical effect on the organism. He suggests that all arts use rhythmic means to achieve communication of experience. He further suggests that man (sic) has made these rhythms as he has ‘made’ colours (25). (I would ask, aren’t they found in our bodies? Also see Lefebvre’s (1985) Rhythmanalytical Project). So dance, voice, instruments, just like colours, forms, patterns, are means of transmitting experience in so powerful a way that it can be lived by others (that is, not just as a ‘way of speaking’...) (Williams, 1961, 24-25).

Thus the arts are certain intense forms of general communication. But then the voice, body, picture are, in their turn, ‘objects’ that have to be interpreted and received (that is, they also have to be interpreted and described before they can be seen), so that we see the social basis of any art. No one can see (not understand, but see) unless they and the artist share details of a learned communication system. So this interpretation can range from failure to misinterpretation to full recognition. It can be due to either party, but the point is to see the nature and difficulty of what is being attempted: the substantial communication of experience from one organism to another (25). There can be no art below this threshold of active offering and active receiving of experience.

To further define the artist’s activity, Williams writes that all share the capacity to find and organize new descriptions of experience (what is usually called ‘creative imagination’) and to transmit these descriptions, which are only in the full sense descriptions when in communicable form (26). The special nature of the artist’s work is her use of a learned skill for transmission (the traditional meaning of art was ‘skill’) but the impulse and purpose is the same as with all human skills of communication: transmission of valued experience. But the artist’s activity is the actual work of transmission, so there is no separation between content and form; finding the form is literally finding the content (that is, the activity we’ve called ‘describing’).

Describing our experience is a remaking of ourselves to include and control the experience. Before and while still comprehending it and organizing it, it is experienced as almost a kind of pain: the impulse to communicate is a learned human response to disturbance. For the individual, it is the struggle to communicate successfully, by describing adequately. For the artist, it is a struggle for description with words or paint, and primarily of personal importance. (Many would call this communication with self.) Attention has to be on making contact with this precise experience, not because description is for its own
sake, but as a condition of relevant communication. The art-work has been made and the artist has remade himself in one continuous process. The artist and the material/experience work on each other, as consciousness and reality interpenetrate each other. The point of this new understanding of perception and communication is that it confirms the creativity of art in terms of a general human creativity (Williams, 1961, 28).

Thus, all can claim the ‘creative,’ yet aesthetic theory tends to preserve the two traditional ideas of the artist being especially inspired, and the idea of revelation of a superior reality. But this excludes so much art and excludes communication as the key social fact. So we need to reject this and describe all art (29-31). It must include the creative activity of reception and response, rather than the idea of ‘inspired’ or ‘uninspired’ transmission to a passive audience. So what are the effects on the spectator? It can be new ways of seeing but it can also be recognition. Art is not always on the frontiers of knowledge but can be at the centre of common experience. It can express the sense of the society, and the means by which common meaning is activated and reproduced. So it is better to speak of art in terms of organization of experience, especially in its effect on spectator or audience. The processes of our organization in living together become institutions, of which art is one.

..The central building of a community, from mound to cathedral, is in fact a means of communication: it both organizes and continues to express a common meaning by which its people live.

(Young, Doubt and Certainty in Science, cited in Williams, 1961, 31)

In short, the discovery of means of communication is the discovery of common meaning (32). It is a continual re-creation of meaning by both individuals and society, as the organization of received meanings encounters emerging experiences and meanings. This process includes the re-creation of the skills of artists (both the means and the meaning as whole process). Though members share common meanings, the process of organization is personal. So the artist may attain a closer or further relation between these meanings and her organization of them. This is of vital importance: despite common assumptions to the contrary, most great art is probably where the relation is close. At the opposite extreme, it is hard to find the means of communication. Change in art is usually about the extension of meaning, or change of means. If too extreme, the pressure (of a new meaning) could simply break up the artist’s organization. Often, the art of a society can change without discontinuity, as an effective number of individual offerings are taken up and composed into new meanings. However, Williams stresses, in our time there is such complexity of change that discontinuity seems central, while common meanings are almost lost. So we are aware of art as primarily individual artistic offerings, so that we tend to stress the individual in theories of
art, and neglect communication, and further, assume an inevitable tension between artist and audience in terms of the artist’s function to describe new experience. But whether ‘new’ (ie. not previously described) or not, there is often a time-lag before its formation into common meanings, and this lag is what creates the sense of change or newness. But society must maintain a reasonable area of common description and response, and this is one of the functions of art and other communication systems. Williams (1961) notes that much new art does this and that also we preserve older art to re-create this common experience. Thus, whether communicating the known or moving us to new forms, art is part of our actual growth, not just in a ‘special’ area of our mind. The distinction of value in art is its power to communicate. Successful communication depends on the artist’s ability to live the experience and make it part of herself. ‘Bad’ art is a failure of this whole process, just as other communications for instance, sexual, are a matter of the whole self. Art communicates experience that can’t be described or communicated in other ways and must be seen as an extension of the capacity for organization, allowing particular areas of reality to be described and communicated. When successful, it re-creates the experience for others. But there are failures or partial failure, where the process of organization/description breaks down and falls back on imitation, or where obviously new description does not communicate sufficiently. Whether we as audience accept new descriptions depends on our capacity to grow in such ways. That is, it depends on our own organization as well as the artist’s. In some cases, we simply cannot respond to experience in that way or we may later reject it. It has to fit into our whole organization and over time (34-35).

Beyond the popular and sentimental formula (artist’s new language> initial resistance> eventual acceptance), the real history of art and process of communication shows three sequences:

Artist’s new language, initial acceptance, continued acceptance

Artist’s new language, initial acceptance, eventual rejection

Artist’s new language, initial resistance, eventual rejection

With new descriptions this unevenness will be marked. But whether new descriptions or common meanings, reception can be unstable and can change. With the recording and preserving of art now available to us, its status is changed. The offering of experience is preserved for long generations but we can only use these stores as we do new art, that is, by the same active process of active learning of, in this case, the old ways (36).

So now Williams notes, we see art as a particular process in the general human process of creative discovery and communication, which both redefines its status and links it to our ordinary social life. The
traditional definition of art as ‘creative’ was important as emphasis but damaging when extended to encompass a contrast between art and ordinary experience. The suggestion that art and culture are ordinary provokes hysterical denial, but the solution is not to pull art down but to recognize creativity in all our living. We create our human world as we have thought of art being created. Art is a major means of precisely this creation (not ‘impractical’, secondary, for ‘leisure-time’ etc.). So reality and art, art and work, aesthetic life and economic life cannot be separated (Williams, 1961, 37-38).

Thus, as Williams (1961) expresses it, Human community grows by discovery of common meanings and common means of communication. Over an active range, the patterns created by the brain and the patterns materialized by a community continually interact... Communication is the process of making unique experience into common experience (38). We are saying, ‘I am living this way because this is my experience’...Since our way of seeing things is literally our way of living, the process of communication is in fact the process of community... (38). We need then, to begin from the whole texture (politics, art, religion, science, family life, etc.) and only then separate out categories, kinds and means of communication. Otherwise, as Williams stresses, we enact a damaging suppression of relationships as, for instance, the way that politics has suffered by its separation from ordinary relationships, and likewise with economics, education, and the relegation of art to an area of special experience.

So this review of creative activity acknowledges the real history of art, which is kept from us by definitions that were stages in its interpretations but which must be moved beyond. Further, by what this review shows us of communication and community, we can review the nature of our whole common life: we have arrived at the terms of the definition of culture. As we grasp the relation between meanings arrived at by creative interpretation and description, and meanings embodied by conventions and institutions, we can then reconcile meanings of culture as creative activity and as a whole way of life.... (40). This reconciliation is a real extension of our powers to understand ourselves and our societies.

**Culture and communication**

Williams (1989) vehemently emphasized the need to theorize around communications and its impacts and relations to psyche, community, and society, as opposed to the tendency he saw in his generation to merely indulge in ongoing critique of mass culture. He saw our getting stuck in such critique as serving to pre-empt any real understanding or change and missing the point. He was concerned to register the error in our ways of thinking about communication, just as with art, as something that happens after reality, as being reflective rather than constitutive of ‘reality.’ Rather, through our communication systems, ‘reality’
forms and is interpreted. Generation after generation, he stressed, we are being shown what to see, how to see it. But we can learn new ways of seeing. Advocating in 1961 for a democratic system of communications over and against the syndrome of paternalistic public ownership (the BBC) or the emerging commercially-dominated model, Williams (1961) makes a plea for a system where the means of communication would be owned by the society in trust for the actual producers: public policy, rather than form a large central organization around public ownership, should encourage the formation of independent groups of all kinds, to whom the publicly owned means would be licensed (31).

COMMUNITY – THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE

Community must be remade from and emerge from within each of us (Buber 1992, 2002).

Raymond Williams (1961) has written extensively on culture as exemplified above, and has articulated how root processes of communication and creativity build up a common culture. Here I wish to explore the notion of community, with the aim of proposing community as the art and work of our human life and the contingent outcome of processes of globalization. As early as 1977, Williams (1977[1989]) astutely problematizes our use of the term community:

Community is unusual among the terms of political vocabulary in being, I think the one term which has never been used in a negative sense. People never, from any political position, want to say that they are against community or against the community...I think on the one hand we should be glad that this is so, on the other hand we should be suspicious. A term which is agreed among so many people, a term which everybody likes, a notion which everybody is in favour of – if this is reflected reality then we’d be living in a world very different from this one. (112)

That we use this term so readily to cover meanings of what we as humans feel we have lost or hope to recover, what we deeply seem to recognize our need for, that upon which we sense our very happiness and survival may depend upon, seems to demand that we confront our assumptions and images of what community is or what we hope it to be, and to set about to consciously revision this notion. Why should we care? As long as such a term remains unexamined, then it and we remain subject to the sentimentalized and idealized versions of it that rest in our own psyches and are reflected by capitalist hegemony, media and common usage. We thereby fail its potential meanings and infinite manifestations and their possible implications for transforming culture; and may in turn be failed by it. If we are deceived
by false hegemonic expressions of community, it may interfere with our capacity to recognize and protect genuine community. It may mean we exclude those we should be including.

There exist our received conceptions of community and also our perceived experiences of it. So we can think of community in three directions: first of an image, a common sense received notion that lives in many of us, to consider its core elements, its patterns which connect; secondly, its many real-world and diverse manifestations in our own lives and histories; and finally, I suggest, as a notion which is ultimately a dynamic unknown, an ongoing philosophical and historical process awaiting our deeper engagement and inquiry. Just as, for instance, feminism was brought into political discourse by description of everyday realities of women’s lives (Highmore, 2002), so we need an active kind of thinking, writing and talking about community that confronts its meanings anew in our discourse, particularly in our current context of globalization and related perceptions of being set adrift from known historical narratives or holding patterns in postmodernity (Giddens, 1991; Tarnas, 1991).

Our given conception of community spans a continuum from simple abstract notations in the local newspaper – citing events in the ‘community,’ someone volunteering in the ‘community,’ someone giving back to the ‘community,’ the arts ‘community’ – in short, a proximity-based, externally defined population any of whom may or may not actually feel a sense of connection to this abstract community – to the other extreme, which seems to consist of a network of connections in which no less than everything is at stake, and which includes those whom we love, hate, live and would die for. Community is that mode of social relations beyond blood, through which we imagine, enact, and reproduce both our individuality and our shared humanity (Williams, 1961). We usually conceive the formation of community as continuously propelled by ever-changing convergences or divergences of such elements as physical proximity, necessity, responsibility and conscience, according to some defined or implied extent.

Community implies ideas such as belonging, identity and continuity. It implies norms such as trust, interdependence, reciprocity, and positive tolerance of diversity. It is that which is perhaps only truly perceived as its various historical or cultural manifestations are disrupted, or which only form in times of crisis (just as Winnicott says below about the family). There are intentional communities and unintentional communities. There are self-defined communities also of interest or practice, especially since the existence of the internet. Many communities exist more contingently than actually; they may come into being and/or self-definition only when faced with a threat or under necessity. As an imaginary, the notion of community seems to carry a meaning of both human potential and human well-being fully and sustainably achieved, within which all human functions are indivisibly woven – partaking of a particular
place or meaning, birth, love and death, work, and creation. In more ideal or archaic meanings, it implies an economy of self-sufficiency in shared land, production and consumption including agriculture, health and education, contented dwelling, shared celebration of natural and cosmic patterns, and a scale – whether village, town, city or neighbourhood – that allows participatory self-governance, and as stressed in several accounts, involving mutual accountability with other self-sustaining communities (Bookchin, 1992,1995, 2007; Buber, 1992, 2002; Williams, 1977[1989]).

In short, these are notions of community that many of us have not and are not likely to experience. Such conceptions of community seem to exist as an image of healing or longing, an archetype which seems to correlate with genuine human need which is not presently being satisfied for most people. It would seem to be the condition for what many of us would define as human happiness, over and against the ways we have been conditioned to define that term. These patterns of connection seem to characterize our operative, everyday definition of community. Two things seem apparent: that the term carries a great weight of meaning and emotional significance and that it is used to describe disparate groupings and contexts. Thus it works readily in hegemonic strategy to cloak and justify many capitalist policies and attitudes for the good of the ‘community,’ and can cloud evaluation of many situations which so describe themselves.

How can we reconceive community in a way that will enhance our possibilities for creative and ethical human groupings? What would a genealogy of community reveal? And how can any kind of community we imagine come about or be recognized if it exists? What does community mean for our well-being? And more deeply, what might community possibly mean for humanity? (This is different from defining it). One way of answering these questions is to advance the historical, emergent nature of community by utilizing the term as a dynamic conceptual tool to be used in the formation, working processes and evaluation of actual groupings, iterating between the theoretical and the concrete. This can achieve three important purposes. It can safeguard our understanding of community as an emergent, dialogic and creative process. Secondly, it can provide or contribute to a visioning and evaluative framework for the working processes of a group at any stage. This could encompass community groups such as small nonprofits where commitment to such frameworks could pre-empt the breakdown of communication and workplace exploitation which can be rife in such groups. This is a crucial consideration if we recognize that such groups are mandated to interface with and serve the larger ‘community’ and this cannot be genuinely accomplished if such groups are determined by the seeming that Buber articulates below. In this sense, every public organization could be accountable to criteria for implementing such a framework.
Finally, such a theorization can inversely safeguard the integrity of diverse manifestations of community against evaluation by fixed definitions. Further and crucially it means that the theoretical and actual are never held to task by one another but move freely in parallel and overlap, sometimes isomorphic, sometimes greatly diverging, but conscious and transparent in either case. The ideal remains an illuminating and instructive presence without ever negating the value of the actual in its intentions, limits or outcomes. Likewise, the actual form contributes always to the ever-evolving fund of inner patterns.

This approach then, theorizes community as the ever unfolding art and work of human life, as means and end, which continually and in infinite contexts and groupings seeks to discover and articulate the inner formation or pattern of community, as that which gathers, guards, circulates and fulfills human meaning, creativity and well-being at an existential and ontological level, and which, in doing so, does this for all human communities which do not cause harm. To posit this implies the primacy of community as over and against other constructions and abstractions such as the nation-state, the corporation, the globalized economy, the seeming, sentimentalized, or the excluding community.

To support the theorization outlined above, this section offers diverse notions of community which together serve the purpose of both unsettling our notion of community and attempt to illuminate its contingencies. These vary in conceptual orientation from the sacred, discursive, or pragmatic, to the secular and ontological. The intention for these is not to fix definition but to engender a poetics of community, contouring both the ideal inner forms and patterns, and the formal templates which can guide us in the ceaseless process of community. These accounts convey narratives of community by Raymond Williams, Martin Buber, Murray Bookchin, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Christopher Alexander. These thinkers emerge from very different milieus, though mainly western and contemporary with one another. Each must be read within their historical moment and cultural context. Following these accounts are reflections on how the process of globalization might impact the potential for emergent community.

**Martin Buber - Community as the Basic Social Framework of Human Creativity**

*For community is the active handling of the common and cannot endure without it.* (1992[1931], 96)

Martin Buber (1992, 2002) during the first half of the 20th century, theorized extensively around community as the major social framework in which cultural creativity can take place. His main concern was with man’s (sic) place in the cosmos and the human predicament, as most fully manifest in problems of creativity in general and in particular, cultural creativity. He was especially concerned to understand the
relation between intersubjectivity and human/cultural creativity. So his specific sociological or social philosophical concern was to define the nature and conditions of social and cultural creativity, as opposed to those of stagnation or destruction. Similarly to Williams, he conceived of culture not as an ideology but as life-style, a mode of life existing in the mundane world, constructed around several tensions or oppositions such as creativity and tradition, revolution and conservatism, the development of form and development of awareness, and receiving its crucial linkages through education. Buber also held the idea that every culture in a state of full development tends to produce a number of distinct and independent cultural types and areas, that is, it tends to a pluralism of spiritual spheres. Though the link between each area and the unified/varied core remains, the links between the areas weaken as their boundaries strengthen. Buber proposes that in a fledgling culture there is often a strong link between ethics and music, and between cosmology and architecture. The division of the areas heralds the disintegration of the culture, which then tends to move towards re-establishment of the original unity.

He thus searched for conditions of cultural creativity and of social authenticity, which might lead to great social transformation or at least be antidotes to stagnation. He believed that condition to be intersubjective dialogue, between person and person, and between person and God. This communicative openness is maximized where participants have strong commitment to both direct interpersonal relations and to direct relations to the realm of the sacred and to the sphere of ultimate values. Such a perspective is similar to Habermas, except for its combination with a strong orientation to the sacred. Buber’s emphasis on the crucial importance of community and education developed in the context of this approach as applied to the analysis of kibbutz, of Hasidic communities, and of educational encounters. Ideally he saw a community as oriented to a centre beyond itself. The openness to both intersubjective relations and to dialogue with the sacred is based on the fact that only such openness can balance the tensions between elements of cultural creativity mentioned above, so that one area does not dominate and stifle the other. This domination is always a potential. A main concern of Buber’s is the power of state over society. Unlike other utopians, he did not however reject politics. Buber saw it as an essential, autonomous component but which needs to be kept within limits, which changes with circumstances and context.

He realized that such cultural creativity was not common, that historical examples would be the Renaissance, China, Greece, and the Kingdom of God of Israelite commonwealth. But crucially, he saw transformative potential in more dispersed, mundane situations such as the co-operative villages in Israel and in adult education, so he differed from other utopians in this too. He was concerned with identifying and if possible, creating such frameworks and situations, whether in theory or practice. He did not see this
as tied to specific content or a formula but as a matter of results arising from continuous process. He saw adult education as being able to generate frameworks of common discourse between different, disparate sectors of society, if constructed as open dialogue as above. Though Buber was interested in various forms of co-operative settlement, he saw their dangers too, through effects such as routinization. Despite having his own vocabulary, his analysis has close relations to classical problems of sociological analysis. He emphasized the need for division of labour to be combined with construction of the trust, meaning and legitimation that could so easily be undermined in it. He also analyzed charismatic orientations. German sociologists saw modern institutional frameworks such as the market, and bureaucratic formations, as alienating and that they could not anyway be the arenas for cultural creativity. Buber believed they could be and that so could other sectors of society. In this sense, it seems fitting that his contribution is more visible and valued in the postmodern era, with for instance, its decharismatization of nation, state, and science, because he always looked for the charismatic and utopian in less central situations, in partial, dispersed utopias, though always with a basic orientation to the sacred and to absolute values (164).

Community in a time like ours can only happen out of breakthrough, out of turning. Only the need aroused by the uttermost sundering, the marginal phenomena, provides the motive force for this. (Buber, 1992, 85)

For Buber, community does not mean just any aggregation of people. There are specific characteristics, based on ideas of genuine conversation as acceptance of otherness and also on specific ideas around the nature of interhuman relations and human dialogue. Community is also conceived as a combination of grounding in some concrete reality such as land (though not necessarily tied to any such setting) or on a primordial basis, and, crucially, openness to a centre beyond any primordial givens. A crucial role is played by a distinct type of leadership promulgating and articulating these relations.

Buber emphasized the importance of psychology for all disciplines, to stay connected to the roots of the lived life. Particularly for social life, he stressed, social forms, structures and actions are derived from psychic processes so must be related to that. If we limit ourselves to investigating external images, structures, correlations, and causality, the essence of society would not be thoroughly disclosed. Only when one grasps society as essentially the experience of souls does one advance to its abiding existential basis (94). He saw social structures as the aggregation of the psychic energy of many, and social action as essentially the transformation of psychic life in rhythm, tempo, and intensity of expression. In terms of social psychology, whose object is social life, his thought is that this social-psychological process takes place in individuals, but is only observable if the individual is in a state of sociation, most visibly in the interpersonal realm, and more obscured within groups.
Writing in the early decades of the twentieth century, Buber saw community as a highly ambiguous concept. He felt that if socialism is the passing of the means of production into the collective, all depends on what we mean by the collective. If the collective is represented by the state, then what is representation? Isn’t it already the problem, so that if we hand over economic representation as well as political representation, then the almost unlimited central accumulation of power will predominate? The more we are represented in our common affairs, Buber (1992) stated, echoing the thought of Raymond Williams and Murray Bookchin, the less community life there is. The primal hope of all history depends on this community of the human race, the communal living of smaller and larger groups that dwell or work together, who are themselves the subjects of the process of production/that the mass in its articulations (various communes) be as powerful as the common economy of mankind affords. That is, he specified, again as did both Raymond Williams and Murray Bookchin, representation should extend only so far as the new order demands. This demands an unremitting testing of the current situation; the truth of the boundary (for community is always vulnerable to oppression by central power) would be our spiritual task, adhering to the Platonic living idea. Community, Buber makes it clear, cannot be formulated as a concept, but is always only the moment’s answer to the moment’s question (97). The essence of community is the fact that it has a centre to which all members have a common relationship above all other relations. It cannot be founded but must arise through historical destiny. Buber acknowledges that it cannot be restored in this world but he is hopeful that it can be reborn. ...it seems to me that each breath of neighbourliness in the apartment building, each wave of a warmer comradeship during the rest period in the highly rationalized factory means a growth of communal-mindedness of the world (99).

New communes or fellowships must be the subjects of transformed economies, which depend on readiness; they need to be economic and political unities at the same time. As with all traffic of the idea with reality, how much economic and political autonomy will be accorded, and how much centralization/decentralization, must be a constant weighing, but should be entirely different from today’s regarding the division between the base and apex of power. Representation must exist but via work-tested representatives of economic communities. The represented and the representatives are to be bound not by a party program, but through common activity and experience. Buber also cites the crucial role played by distinct type of leadership promulgating and articulating these relations (91). Most essential is that the process of community formation must extend into the relation between communities. Only a community of communities may be called a communal being (100).
Buber (2002) usefully opposes society to community, following Ferdinand Tonnies, describing community as having qualities of *grown* relatedness, relation-bearing will, held together by common possession (mainly soil), common work and common belief, mutual help and support for production and consumption and entire social life. Community then is an entity not binding the individual with the shackles of the state, but under the complete protection of the creative expressions of a particular group of individuals, such as the medieval city. Society is, on the other hand, defined as regulated segregation, held together *externally* by force, contract, convention, such as the modern mega city. Modern socialism enters, aiming to counter this, but in granting the state the power to regulate all work and social interaction, it robs the possibility of free, soul-filled justice. There can be no impulse for community in such a context. Is the decline of community an inescapable evolution then, Buber asks? We in the age of individualism, that is, *the separation of the person from its natural social connex*, cannot return to the original life of community, Buber makes clear:

> For this original life was not a union of separate individuals but a whole that presented itself as binding together the manifoldness of individuals with strong and untouchable holy bonds, just as in great poems the verse is not a stringing together of words, but the other way around: The words are an untangling of the original unity of the verse (248).

So we can’t return to this, Buber stresses, as does Raymond Williams, but we can advance to a different, creative unity that, though it is not *grown* like the first, can still be *created* from true soul material, so will be no less authentic. He says that both community and society are expressions of will power. Those who would have this must ...*want the community from the depths of their souls*... (250). We no longer have the will for totality in its natural form, yet: *...is it not true that in the purest hours of our life we feel the buried energies breaking forth to create a unity born from spirit*... (48).

Buber was adamant on how the approach to community followed through seamlessly to the personal. Thus if a circle of intellectuals speaks passionately about transformation of human relations, yet without real knowledge of each other, they will not be able to influence social reality any more than the group’s reality. *The truthfulness of one’s political beliefs is established only in one’s natural, ‘unpolitical’ sphere. There, the true seeds of communal power are to be found. To the illuminating Hasidic teaching that every man is in charge of his immediate environment, to redeem it, should be added that no shorter way than this leads to the redemption of the world*... (250). For Buber, longing for community is longing for God. All craving for real relationship points to God; and all craving for God points to real community.
Buber (2002) stresses the fact of community as an association of lives, whereas ‘society’ is the association of shared interests. He cites the family as the cell of community, and communal existence as an association of communal cells, suggesting that community does not arise from individuals. So the rebirth of community depends on the rebirth of family which is failing. We cannot choose to make a community anymore than we can make a personality. When people have a ‘living middle’ at their centre, then community can arise among them: when they do not ‘intend,’ ‘but feel and know that something is in their midst, even though they cannot name it’ or it has no name, but know they can serve this middle and what it demands (253).

He cites the historical forms of community – the national community, or community of fate/or older village community of work; the community of faith (with Judaism being an example of a community of fate and faith, but which has lost its vitality); and a third he posits as the happening community; the community in progress which arises from the other versions when a group of people experiences a communal moment in a catastrophically and transforming way, in the way of a most unsettling and serious decision... (255-256). Nor is community simply a matter of a new social order. Community can happen in a society of rebellion and opposition as much as in a society of order, such as in the early stages of the Russian Revolution, which was an example of the third version.

There is then no formula, notes Buber. We can only be open in our innermost, sacred heart and realize it in our own environment. It is linked with every decision we make in every moment and can only be realized in the givenness of everyday life at its lowest level. So it is not just a matter of social struggle, such as reducing work hours, when there is no regard for the inhumaneness of work which remains. The human reason behind technology and invention must be oriented to humaneness. However, he emphasizes that adjoining this objective demand is the personal demand: as long as these social goals have not been reached, the individual person wherever she stands, practices and protects humaneness to the best of her abilities. What matters is what we do here and now, our responsibility to the moment....If not there, then nowhere (257).

What communal forms might exist then? Buber sees the importance of such a question, as capitalism has broken down these forms, and is oriented towards the individual. Production and consumption are the foundations of society but have been taken from us. Buber asserts that production co-ops and consumer co-ops are not enough; they need to be both, a full co-op, such as the Village Commune. Most such efforts in Europe and America have failed. This is in part because success depends on their federation, a union under the same principles that operate in their internal structure and which connects them as cells of a
newly structured society in the socialist sense and not just isolated. Success depends on their structural influence on urban society and the decentralization of industry. This is not about destroying towns but about transforming them organically. He cites examples of various forms of Jewish Village Commune in Palestine as the only one successful in the socialist sense. Why? Buber (2002) writes that it owes its existence not to doctrine but to need and situation – *ideal motives joined with the dictates of the hour* (193). These were dynamic not static or programmatic, a case where external/historical crisis prompted great inner change. It threw up pioneers (‘Chaluzim’) that were beyond class. Its spirit became an influence on a national idea, not static or isolated and further it was successful because it fit historical conditions. The setback happened when conditions changed. Problems emerge within the group, which are not about lack of intimacy which is either there or not and doesn’t matter, but about openness and readiness for one another. The issue is then tension between those who take whole responsibility and those who somehow evade it. *This tension can only be resolved at a very deep level.* Then a further problem emerged that was equally part of the fate of these groups, this time between the groups. Despite (federative) Kibbutzim, political developments and lack of neighbourly relationship...has seen problems with unification. So, if all this has been partially successful, then we can vary it under other and less favourable conditions. The proper function of the state then, for Buber, is to maintain unity, and for adjustment and administration only.

**Raymond Williams - Beyond oppositional politics**

Raymond Williams (1961, 1989) from his own time and place, contributed an eloquent, experiential analysis of the historical shift in culture from community to the more abstract society and its associated losses, as well as offering pragmatic visions for how we can move from the flawed representative forms of democracy which cannot accomplish what they purport to do, to more direct forms. Williams can be situated in historical sequence as both contemporary with and following Buber, and from a secular European milieu as compared with Buber’s religious context. Likewise he was contemporary with Murray Bookchin. Williams’ concrete proposals for socialist policy can be seen as resonant with and complementing Buber’s sketches of the community of communities, and with Bookchin’s to follow below, but much less polemical and discursive than Bookchin. Writing in 1977, Williams (1989 [1977]) spoke of the need to go beyond oppositional politics and, like Buber, implies there is no going back, but only beyond the forms we have come to:
...we have learned all too harshly and bitterly the truth of this latest phase, the phase of negation, the phase of knowing that you have to go beyond the simple community, the phase of the quick identification of enemies, the phase also of very conscious and prolonged political abstraction. If we merely counterpose to that the forms of a simpler kind of politics, I very much doubt if we shall engage in the central struggle. On the other hand, if that negative politics is the only politics then it is the final victory of a mode of thought which seems to me the ultimate product of capitalist society. Whatever its political label it is a mode of thought which really has made relations between men (sic) into relations between things or relations between concepts. And yet to re-establish the notion of politics as relationships between men (sic), to re-establish the ideas of community politics, would mean superseding, going beyond, that kind of politics rather than merely in turn negating it. (Williams, 1989[1977], 117)

On the specifics of socialist democratic forms, Williams sees this as based on new kinds of communal, co-operative and collective institutions where all stakeholders in a decision are involved, but he stresses the need then for discussion on the relations between these institutions and the undoubted need for larger-scale institutions (writing in 1982):

The attraction of self-management, as now commonly foreseen, is its whole and direct democratic character. It is a conscious stage beyond representative democracy...Yet it is clear that most of its projections and experiments assume small-scale enterprises and communities, where its principles are more evidently practicable. What is then left, beyond these, on larger scales, is either some vague and general goodwill or...the socialist command economy. (1989[1972], 273)

Rather than the given simplistic contrast of large and small, Williams (1989) differentiates the need for new kinds of intermediate institutions to deal with, for example, complex industrial processes, larger populations or relations between localities. In facing such difficult problems of defining areas of responsibility, he emphasizes the need to adjust received language for new emphases: rather than ‘power from the base’ or ‘starting from the grass roots’, each better than devolution or decentralization, he would see it expressed as ‘power in the base’, ‘power at the grass roots.’ Thus:

It is now a matter of urgency to discuss and identify the appropriate scales of decision-making, through a range of size of communities from the parish or ward to the county or
city, on through the minority nation or region to presumed national levels, and beyond these again to any wider international community. In practice, in orthodox politics, these scales and levels are being continually negotiated and contested, and there is much available practical experience. But the socialist intervention will introduce the distinctive principle of maximum self-management, paired only with considerations of economic viability and reasonable equity between communities, and decisively breaking with the new dominant criterion of administrative convenience to the centralized state. (Williams, 1989, 273)

We will see how Bookchin eventually decried the effects of cooperatives, and it is instructive to see how Williams thought through this larger question of scales and the in-between areas.

Jean-Luc Nancy - the law of the world is sharing

Though difficult to decipher if lacking fluency with his philosophical conceptual vocabulary, Nancy’s (1991, 2007) enigmatic formulations can release us from overly rationalistic accounts of community and lead us into the finer meanings and contingencies linking these phenomena. He is challenging community as the immanence of commonality, as essence. He posits that community is composed of singular beings that ‘share’ their singularity in their being toward death. Community does not sublate the finitude it exposes. Community itself, in sum, is nothing but this exposition (1991, 26). Such finite singularities are exposed to each other. Community is the co-sovereignty of singular beings. The exposition of singularity is what is communicated (1991, 29). But Nancy insists this communication is not a bond. Singularities are given without communion and without bond. Raffoul and Pettigrew (in Nancy, 2007) write, For Nancy this mutual exposure of the singularities is an undecidable tension from which the creation of the world must unfold. That struggle, in its singularity and the infinitely finite enactment of possible beginnings, is nothing less than, for Nancy, the condition and definition of justice (2007, 22).

Drawing out the crucial links that (2007) Nancy articulates between community, globalization and creation, they further clarify that the suppression of such a creation of meaning, constitutes injustice. Nancy contrasts such openness to new beginnings, new worlds, new creations, with the ‘unworld’ of the technology wielded by metaphysics and globalization (22). Nancy seems to be proposing that the force of globalization sweeping over us is a kind of world-destroying effect because it totalizes everything. But thereby it presents the possibility of generating the world, an openness to new beginnings, new creations, new worlds through recognizing the world as diverse and multiple and subject to no authority, arising
from nothing, that meaning can only be shared out, that the law of the world is sharing, which opens the question and space of justice, such that justice would be a world that is constituted by this inexhaustible creation of meaning (Nancy, 2007, 22).

Murray Bookchin – Municipal Communalism

Throughout the later decades of the 20th century, Bookchin (1992 [1995], 1995, 2007) advanced a densely historical and highly discursive and polemical critique of the domination of humans by humans that feeds capitalism. He contributed an inspiring, aesthetic idea of the city as embodying public and political space and ideally a forum for direct citizen democracy, with rightful relations restored with its rural surrounds (1995 [1992]). His vision encompasses, like Bateson’s, a fierce critique of the anti-humanist, anti-rationalist mysticism that emerged in the 70s with the deep ecology and human potential movement, particularly in the western U.S. of sunbelt of California, bringing trends from eco-mysticism to ‘angelology’ (1995). Lacking the psychological and transpersonal core of Buber’s vision, it shares with Williams the essential feature of shared accountability between confederated communities (2007). Buber’s opposition to the role of the state is more moderate than Bookchin’s. He stresses that his model refutes dogma and acknowledges that its authentic starting point is personal discourse and the small study group, a more discursive version of Buber’s ‘personal demand’ and ‘personal making present’ (1992[1965], 72).

In the end, Bookchin posits a vision of social ecology where our ecological crisis is not separated from the social factors and economic ideology which generated it.

For Bookchin (1995 [1992]), the growing civil society and communitarian ethic emerging in many urban environments in the 70s and 80s were not enough to create social change. Co-ops and community-based, cooperative businesses always have to end up either adapting to a profit basis or going out of business, as long as they occur within a capitalist framework. Rather, we need to oppose to this a political power, based on direct citizen democracy anchored in recovery of city life (with public space) rather than in the nation-state, which Bookchin believed should have no place at all. He wished explicitly to recover classical meanings of the words politics, citizen, democracy, city, using classical Greece (even acknowledging all its shortcomings) as the founding image for this vision. However he is not implying a localist notion in a naive, isolated sense. Even Athens, he points out, as a self-sufficient polis, had to engage in Mediterranean-wide wheat trade to secure many of its everyday needs.

Bookchin conceives the human-scaled city as a public arena in which we intermingle to discuss public affairs. Often the city extends too far beyond the scale or horizon, physical or psychic, of the average
resident. This is somewhat mitigated by the fact that as major metropolises have grown, sweeping surrounding areas into councils, such as in the UK, some WWII suburbs knitted themselves into small towns with an integrity of their own (a kind of defacto decentralization), while older areas tend to retain a good deal of their physical integrity. This needs to be registered as we look to a new politics based on real citizenship. Where most people define the city in spatial and geographic terms, Bookchin is concerned to view the city as the history of the city, that is, in terms of its cumulative development or dialectic of important social potentialities. Least of all does he see it as a ‘system of space’ as do some contemporary theorists (he is critiquing Lefebvre here) exercising what he calls quasi-mystical postmodern gymnastics.... (Bookchin,1992[1995]), 6). Rather, he sees the city as defined by a creative breach with our biological heritage, that is, in terms of a transformation of human relationships gradually evolving from biological facts of kinship and tribe, to an acceptance of strangers, of the other, and the accompanying shift to more secular institutions. The city gives rise to universalizing cultural relations and economic activities previously associated with kinship, gender, and ethnic divisions. The notion of shared humanitas replaces the exclusivity of clan and tribe (6).

Bookchin recounts in detail the cumulative history of city life. This begins with the late medieval city built on the ancient civic and ideological traditions of rationalism, morality and law in Athens. Later the Renaissance, Baroque and Enlightenment reworked all the arenas of ancient and medieval cities, also transforming them. He does not intend these as ideal examples, but as foundations of the innovation they achieved, such as the directly democratic institutions that emerged in 18th century Paris. These precedents present the possibility for setting up a theoretical framework for a new politics, where confederated municipalities enable grass-roots structures in a participatory democracy. Such a configuration is explicitly opposed in Bookchin’s view, to the centralized nation-state and mere representation, where politics is confused with statecraft. He sees state power as inherently corruptive. For Bookchin this requires a completely uncompromising politics. For such a municipalist movement to run candidates for state, provincial or national office would in his view, inherently be a subversion of its claim to seek a participatory democracy. It would also compromise the education function of politics at the bottom, which this communitarian vision also crucially encompasses, as elaborated below. He is not advocating that state power should be seized but that popular power be expanded until all power belongs to the institutions of a participatory democracy. The particulars would vary from country to country, locality to locality; this is not proposing a fixed electoral dogma. Its authentic starting point is personal discourse and the small study group. Bookchin is concerned to make a clear distinction between the above image of city life and what he sees as our current urbanization, the evolution and decline of city life, leading to not just geographic
sprawl but the dehumanization of city life, the de-structuring of community and the denaturing of agrarian life that threatens city and country life alike (Berry, 2002). He does not see the rural and urban opposed as does conventional wisdom. We can’t ignore the historical and evolutionary force of the city for humanity but we can give it new meaning, politics and new ideals of citizenship.

Bookchin (1995 [1992]) saw that both city space with its human propinquity, distinctive neighbourhoods and human-scale politics, and rural space with its nature, mutual aid and strong family relationships, are both being absorbed by urbanization, with its anonymity, homogenization and institutional gigantism. He crucially distinguishes this effect of urbanization from the city itself. These features we now think of as part of cities and urbanization (city-type occupations, synthetic environments, non-food related livelihoods, dense dwellings, anonymity, pre-packaged culture for what becomes ‘leisure’ time) are, he stresses, not intrinsic to cities. History presents other examples and most of our utopian visions took the form of the city, conjuring images of cities centred around public squares, rooted in a marketplace of craftspeople, and in a natural environment. What these diverse cities shared were rather, moral or spiritual attributes, civic ideology and belief in the good life. He would call them communities of the heart, founded in love of one’s city, love of the land and place, a rich ecological sensibility and respect for the countryside. In contrast, our perspective tends toward very pragmatic material requirements, evaluating our cities in terms of ‘municipal services,’ and the expectation of being tidy and safe from undesirable elements (19).

Bookchin discusses how in ancient Greece, the aristocracy became a democracy, when the Greeks gave us our first idea of the citizen. Previously, tribal communities assembled based on kinship, whether real or fictitious, and had made decisions but these were based in custom, conservatism, stability, whereas the form of the political assembly is of free individuals based on habitat not kinship (his ethical idea of the city above). What united citizens of the polis was a profoundly cultural conception of personal development, the notion of paideia, a deeply formative and life-long education process which made the person an asset to family and community and induced him to live up to community’s highest ethical standards. There is no word in English for this creative integration of the individual into his environment, a balance that demands a critical mind with a wide-ranging sense of duty. The notion of paideia is combined with the notion of arête, expanded from Homeric times to mean goodness, virtue and excellence in all aspects of life, so both are a unified process of self-and-civic development. So politics is concerned not just with administering the polis but with educating the citizen as a public being who developed the competence to act in the public interest (63-64).
All this is clearly an antithesis to our modern notion of ‘politics’ and the idea of education as mere acquisition of knowledge and skills. The Greeks assembled as *ekklesia* (assembly of the people) not just to formulate policies and make judgments, but to mutually educate each other in the ability to act justly. So politics was processual, not institutional and administrative; it was a living, everyday practice and curriculum for intellectual, personal and ethical growth. This practice was mediated through family elders and tutors and in a variety of public spaces, mainly the *agora*. Differently than in our own time, home and private life were held in smaller esteem than public life. This work would share space in the agora with artisans, jugglers, play-actors, poets, visitors, merchants and women selling the farm produce that fed the community. In its variety and diversity, it modeled a genuine ecological community within the *polis*. *Ekklesia* was rooted in this daily ferment of life. Concerns would be taken to *ekklesia*, then formed into the institutional expression of an unstructured and popular politics. Bookchin ‘sees’ this anarchic dimension as the ground for libertarian structures that would have otherwise turned into oligarchic institutions. He describes words like *constituent* and *voter* as modern parodies of a genuine politics that is properly more existential than formal. Greece’s long journey from a tribal to a political world thus maps the biography of the *citizen*, an ideal approximated here more than anywhere since (64-66).

Regarding hopes for a radical politics in our time, Bookchin (2007) stresses that since the last phase of radical workers’ insurrections in the 30s (in which he was closely involved), advanced capitalism has managed to survive its crises despite increased inequality. Capitalism has not collapsed from within. But our ecological crisis may provide the external conditions for such a crisis, with the community, in the form of neighbourhood, town and municipality, as a locus for the ecology movement, replacing the factory as the locus of proletarian radicalism. Problems that cut across material, ethnic and cultural differences would give rise to a genuine public sphere. Society, politics and the state would then once again be differentiated after so long being viewed ahistorically as though they are givens. He recounts how politics etymologically means management of the community by its citizens and recognition of rights for strangers, implying a universal *humanitas*, no longer just based on blood ties and its exclusion, so the city is precisely based in exposure to outsiders/others and gives rise to this public domain that is at odds with state. The state too developed historically and cannot be reduced to an ahistorical image. The rise of the state weakened the vitality of the municipality; however it also belies the historical capacity of the municipality to limit the power of the state. Politics is now (falsely) identified with statecraft, so even big cities such as London have and indeed must function well by means of politically decentralized institutions. Like Buber, Bookchin emphasizes that these communities must be connected and mutually accountable, not isolated or parochial. This would take the form of confederations based on shared
responsible and full accountability of confederal delegates to their communities. The latent instability of the nation-state must be positioned vis-à-vis community-rooted resistance, of which Bookchin cites many historical examples such as the Madrid Citizen’s Movement, the Parisian Labour movement, the Levellers of seventeenth century London and the 20th century anarcho-syndicalists of Barcelona, all of this radical activity sustained by a public sphere of streets, squares and cafes. What Bookchin calls anemic parliamentarism and single-issue movements cannot be confused with the long-range radicalism that is needed to change consciousness and society itself. Nor is or should this radical municipalist approach be an easy solution; it must be fought for just as the fight for a free society must itself be as liberating and self-transforming as the existence of a free society. Currently, municipalities replicate the structure of state. Municipalities, built around genuinely political grassroots movements, would ultimately be the cellular tissue of a new society, a commune of communes (66). This echoes Buber’s image above of the family as the cell of a community. Likewise, Bookchin acknowledges that A movement cannot be a substitute for the fact that there are historical forces that must converge with ideas (1996, interview).

Bookchin’s practical vision for municipalities conveys the polemical force and persuasiveness of his arguments:

To achieve municipal control of the economy in a confederated way, in my opinion, is part of a transitional program in which municipalities try step by step, and hopefully through the control of neighbourhood assemblies, to take over more and more of the local economy. If we think this solution through, and work it out, and if there is a movement devoted to achieving the two goals of genuine participatory democracy on the political level and a genuine municipalized economy on the material level – then, I believe, there is a potential answer to the global crisis we face today. If municipalities begin to generate their own means of life through confederations – I don’t believe that one municipality can do anything at all by itself – and to utilize an ever greater number of material resources in their own localities or regions, we can begin to circumvent the mobility of capital, notably its ability to simply take off when it doesn’t like a situation and go to some other part of the world.... (1996, interview)

Regarding cultural differences, he was likewise unflinching: Well, I have due respect for cultural differences – aesthetically speaking....Dress ... traditions ... belief systems. But when it comes to how people are going to share this world together, I am frankly universalistic (1996, interview).
Still we are left with questions such as how such a radically or humanely-inclined collective of individuals might come about organically rather than being imposed or coaxed from the outside (Buber 1992).

**Christopher Alexander- the local town hall**

Alexander (1977) cites the ecological basis for the prescription that cities and towns be comprised of a ‘mosaic of subcultures’ (his pattern no. 8) which are identifiably separated by nonresidential boundaries, yet fully accessible to all at all times. This ensures that the unique service needs of each subculture are viably met and that diversity of culture is sustained against the hazard of homogenous mass culture that can arise in many cities if members of subcultures are randomly dispersed or, on the other hand, the detrimental homogenization of ghettos based on racial or economic status. Such subcultures will in turn give rise to identifiable neighbourhoods (pattern no. 14), based on house clusters (pattern no.37) involving spatial clusters of 8 to 12 houses with common land between, as opposed to city-owned streets which cannot reflect the needs of residents to interact regularly. This vision builds to Alexander’s proposal for pattern no. 12, ‘communities of 7000’ whereby city governments are decentralized to ensure the maximum of 5000-10,000 citizens which it is believed enable communities to initiate, decide and implement self-management over land use, housing, maintenance, school, welfare and neighbourhood services, revising city charters if necessary to transfer this power. Like Bookchin, Alexander cites precedence for this in Athenian democracy in the 3rd and 4th centuries B.C. He cites that Jefferson had the same plan for American democracy. In communities beyond this scale, political alienation is inescapable. This must extend to ensuring the visible location of such a local government, a ‘political heart.’ He figures this centre as pattern no.44, ‘Local Town Hall’. A local town hall would, alternatively, allow ordinary citizens regular access, engagement and debate, and would encompass surrounding common space for gathering and lingering. It must further be physically located at the heart of the community, such as at a major intersection, where all can walk to it. Ideally neighbourhoods would have their own hall too, so the size and type of these buildings can vary from a room to a building the size of a large house. To become a source of real local power, these town halls must support the process of community organization, and must therefore materially provide community territory. This implies a public forum or arena and a space to rent out for community projects with work space, storefronts, meetings rooms and needed equipment. Thus, public services would be arranged around the arena, as would the ‘necklace of community projects’ (pattern no.45), which forms the outer face of town hall, as a ground for community action. Such an image contrasts drastically with the large and enclosed city halls common over the last century, governing much larger populations.
Fischlin and Nanorfy – the rights of community

Focusing on the rights of community and the community of rights, Fischlin and Nandorfy (2012) cite a key meaning of community as embodied agency: Community is no sentimental paradise but an unavoidable material reality that is made and remade on a continual basis. This multiform remaking occurs in the contexts of alienation, uncertainty, and dissidence, just as surely as it does in affiliation, solidarity, mediation and negotiation (92). They further acknowledge the underlying spiritual understanding that is connected to the ethics of encounter and the relational community of rights (93). The question of the rights of community, to which they bring crucial attention, may be more effectively addressed as the discourse on community is deepened and revitalized.

Globalization, place and community

I suggest that forms of community are the nexus of human relatedness and creativity which precede and can emerge or re-emerge from nation-state, ethnicity, gender and other categories constructed over time, through historical forces which at a certain point destroy or pre-empt community and ultimately catalyze its re-emergence. I suggest that the process of globalization, with its reconfigurations of place and social relations and the exigency of our growing ecological crisis, is that historical phase which can catalyze revitalized and emergent forms of community. Recalling the narratives of globalization cited in Part One, the transnational civic formations iterated by Alvater (1998), Appadurai (1996[2008]), Massey (2005), and Sassen (2007) can for example, exemplify conditions and motivations that might lead to new expressions of community, explicitly political and otherwise. For instance, their contingencies may come to constitute the necessity of community formulated by Buber (1992; 2002). In their very nature as postnational and as alliances transcending those shaped by hegemony, a keynote of such formations would be their protection of the interests of all communities, that is, they would be intrinsically founded in the ethic of care. These would seem to fit with Bookchin’s vision of communalism (1992, 1995, 2007). Likewise, Greenberg (2009) cites the increasing movement back to city centres which may portend a new form of democratic public space, as well as the dissolution of the false dichotomy dividing the city from the natural world (41). Further, he notes the common imperative and broad appeal of solving our ecological crisis, and the emerging aesthetic and economic possibilities this catalyzes. Allowing for diverse outcomes, Buber (1992, 2002) and Berry’s (2002) notions of community may or may not superimpose on Appadurai’s (1996[2008] globalization-conscious locality, or in the locales he cited where state controls restrict neighbourhoods as context-producers. Devising the framework for relating the
global, national and local, which Appadurai said has yet to emerge, could provide further insight into the diverse subjects and situations that would constitute the communities visioned here. In general, I propose the *theoria* that our ecological crisis ensues from the absence of, and can only be healed by the emergence of genuine community. There is the hope that the *end* of globalization will be community.

What is necessary is that each ear and heart open themselves up, and that our entire energy makes itself available to what is calling us, each one in his own power and place where he can act concretely. If each one is serious about community with his innermost, sacred heart, he can realize it only in his own environment; he can realize community only to the extent of his own capabilities; he can realize it only if he does not seek to experience community, if he does not seek ‘community’ at all, but lives up to it as being capable of community, by truly living together with others. (Buber, 2002[1930], 256)
Community as idea and ontology

We could even say that community is a way of inquiring into and moving towards community. That community is a way. That community is the human work and inquiry of imagining and protecting community. Community is the prerequisite of community. Community is crucible. Community is rite.

Community entails beneficience, care, and carnival. Stretching De Certeau, Lefebvre's and others' conceptions of carnival (Highmore, 2002) as forms of resistance immanent in everyday life, I would go further to suggest that community is, and enables, carnival.

Community is that which, once we have our idea of it, we must surrender it to that of another.

That which is not apart from anything we do or be, which ties on to things/things tie on to it. It makes a lie of globalization.

That which is indivisible from or is only apprehended or activated through the forces which render it visible or violated.

Those or that which you exist for/whom exist for you; hence you give your lives to each other or for each other as necessary because your existence is innately already for each other/the other.

The limit of that which, in reciprocity, we are with or seek to be with to survive and/or be, and that which we agree to consider, assist, or care for, or sacrifice for...; that this 'limit' may begin and end with ourselves (as we contain the other), but will always at least seek towards another.

As a membership of beings, human or nonhuman, for whom these definitions cited constitute common belonging without fear of conditionality.

That which is all this, with or without knowing itself to be/ who know and perceive these things to be true of themselves or not, and which therefore truly allows the members to call it their community whether they do or not.

Questions follow from this: what is the difference and what does it mean when we are conscious of community, when we are even conscious of it as far as to trouble to define the notion; what effect does this have? Who defines or names a community to be so? Where does the act of naming come from? From inside or outside or both? So much seems to hinge on this.
That which contains and informs all other forms of community.

There are, to use Buber’s term, seeming communities.

Do we know or name our communities, and how?

Those who are your community are eternally so, even when they are no longer ‘present’ in your life or are seemingly absented for a time. We know this by the fact of death. As Benjamin (1936[1968]) notes that stories, that our lives, gain their authority from our death, so we know the totality of anything through boundary, death, or ending.

Implied by all the above is that genuine communal formations cannot tolerate either internal or external hegemonic determination as this, I suggest, constitutes a form of harm which undermines all community life.
TOWARDS THE SELF AND SOCIAL LIFE

When asked whether the type of citizen he envisages depends on psychological transformation, Bookchin suggests that, beyond movements and historical forces, any shift will likely depend upon a vanguard, which he sees applicable in politics as much as an avant-garde in art, and which he defines as: *those who have a higher level of consciousness as a result of more education, experience, training, reflection, and discussion* – without such an avant-garde emerging I doubt that people will inevitably, spontaneously, and miraculously arrive at a solution to their problems. *They’ll go in many different ways* (1996, interview).

If we to think through and break down these components – historical forces, social movements, and the consciousness of the individual, all as determining factors, what can we discover? Our configurations as individuals, at both the unique, personal level and in the general sense, are surely the hardest to factor in to such speculations. What has the individual come to signify in our culture, and how can our reflections on this question help us transform culture beyond a sheer, and sheerly futile, willing into existence of communal beings who will create and sustain vital cultures? We are so accustomed in our culture to think of the individual as the primary unit, the focus of meaning, that I have deliberately placed consideration of the self after the reflections on culture and community. I suggest that our emphasis on the individual has undermined and obfuscated our understanding, hopes for, and experiences of community in western culture. What assumptions, now historically obscured, have shaped our conception of the individual? Raymond Williams leaves a legacy of thought on this subject too. He historicizes our notions of the individual and society, much as Bookchin did with our given notions of state and politics, making way for revitalized thinking on these dimensions. Buber has contributed valuable formulations of the interpersonal realm as a little-considered but essential, ontological realm in itself.

Williams (1961) writes that in medieval thinking, ‘individual’ meant ‘inseparable.’ The individual was defined by its membership in a group or whole, speaking in this context from a theological perspective. Who is this self that can live within our imaginations of community, that can meet the ‘personal demands’ and *willingness* that Buber speaks of above and that others such as Bookchin imply less directly (Buber, 2002, 257; 48)? How do conditions for such selves emerge in the face of claims such as those by Herbert Marcuse (1992) that an *affirmative character structure* predominates in our culture (32)?
Buber’s vision of intersubjectivity

Buber (1992 [1965]) formulates a conception of the interpersonal as a crucial separate category (between person and person), rather than leaping from the individual to the social level as we tend to do; he suggests that we tend to suppress this level. He bases this on the observation and claim that our essential humanity is such that we cannot be completely objectified or observed; we can only be wholly perceived in partnership. The interhuman is a dialogical unfolding where a person is confronted by the other. It is not a psychological phenomenon, not about each or both together, but about the dialogue between (67-70). The essential problem of this sphere he depicts as the duality of being and seeming, two different types of human existence (70). What one really is, and what one wishes to seem, tend to be blended together but usually one or the other predominates. This should be an important study for anthropology, Buber suggests, not just for moral philosophy. ‘Truth’ or authenticity in this realm depends not on saying everything that occurs but on letting no seeming come between self and other, on granting to the other a share of his being. In human dependence on one another, we need to be confirmed in our being by others; seeming may seem to assist this. But to yield to seeming is our essential cowardice, to resist it our essential courage. It is a worthy struggle to come into confidence in being, even when we seem defeated, though sometimes we pay dearly. We can drive out the ghosts of seeming (72).

For the rise of genuine dialogue (as opposed to what he calls today’s speechifying) we should regard the other as the very one (s)he is, even if we are in strict opposition to her views and must try to show her the wrongness of it, still confirming her as creature and creation (73). Now, he continues, it depends on the other whether genuine dialogue can arise between us. Awareness of another means perceiving her wholeness as determined by the spirit, stepping into elemental relation when she becomes present to me. Buber calls this personal making present, that is, each one means and makes present the other in her personal being (74). Everything modern opposes this perception of the other as a whole in favour of an analytical and reductive stance, destroying the mystery between person and person. Our social sciences are valid for furthering knowledge, but we must recognize their boundaries. We must develop in ourselves and the next generation the gift of what some call intuition, or what he calls imagining the real....a bold swinging... into the life of the other (75).

So, for Buber, the invasion of seeming and the inadequacy of perception are obstacles to this existential connection. A third consists in imposing on the other, that is, the forces of propaganda, as opposed to education where there is existential communication between someone in actual being and someone in process of becoming (77). This would be a teacher as helper of actualizing forces rather than imposing,
based on his belief that in every person what is right is established in a uniquely personal way. These are two antithetical attitudes to exemplify but one always tends to dominate (either imposing on someone or helping someone to unfold). They are anthropological facts; they point to an ontology of the interhuman. For Buber (1992) believes that humankind exists anthropologically not in isolation but in relation. So the conditions for this connection are: being rather than seeming; personal making present; not imposing; no demand that one influence the other in his unfolding, but this is a higher stage of the interhuman. It is connected to the Aristotelian image of entelechy, that is, innate self-realization. But this is entelechy of the work of creation: the self serves not the individual but is the leading to the highest of life through our highest selves and interactions. Such are the marks of genuine dialogue, being that which confirms the other in her being, which does not imply approval, and which means nothing is kept back (the opposite of unreserved speech). It already exists as that which wishes to be uttered and which belongs to the common life of the word. Silence is equally valuable, with the intent to speak when the words are ready and needed, though we never know in advance what we have to say. It cannot be arranged beforehand; genuine dialogue cannot occur if others are present who will not take part. Because genuine dialogue is an ontological sphere which is constituted by the authenticity of being, every invasion of semblance must damage it (79).

I suggest that Buber’s ontological notions of the interpersonal, and related notions of seeming and imposing as damaging to interpersonal encounter, can serve to expose the way these attitudes negatively permeate our culture, though they are largely obscured as ‘natural’ because such behavioural patterns are extensions of capitalist ideology in so many realms such as work, politics, education, health, and parenting, with exceptions occurring in some therapeutic approaches. Bookchin’s polemical approaches to communalism can seem in some ways to encompass such an `imposing` approach.

**Raymond Williams on the Individual**

*In the case of the individual and society we need to learn ways of thinking and feeling which will enable us genuinely to know each in the other’s terms, which is as near as we can ordinarily get to saying that we are studying forms of organization in a continuous process: the brain, the nervous system, the body, the family, the group, the society, man (sic). (Williams, 1961, 98)*

Williams’ (1961) commentary on the individual’s relation to society effectively reinforces Buber’s reading that ontologically, we exist not in isolation but in relation. He chronicles how the change in emphasis for meaning of the individual from that of membership in a group to a kind of absolute,
separable entity, occurred in the late 16th and early 17th centuries in England. He suggests it can be seen as mirroring or paralleling the shift in consciousness during the Protestant Reformation, where the orientation to the larger collective order of God and the Church could now be conceived as a personal direct relationship with God. Likewise, in medieval society, people had been defined by their position in the social order, such as being a peasant, artisan, or knight. With the emergence of capitalism and increased mobility, the notion of the individual gradually encompassed an expanded sense of choice in what he or she might become, although our custom of self-definition by our ‘work’ has clearly persisted. As the abstraction of the individual from its matrix of relationships occurred, likewise the same occurred in turn with notions of society, community and state. Thus, ‘the individual’ became the starting-point for the disciplines of psychology, ethics and politics, while various traditions by turn idealized the individual or a version of the community or state, or mediating terms such as the community.

Williams traces the history of how Freud more deeply divided the notion of the individual from society with his formulation of anti-social drives, yet his mediating notion of the importance of the family paved the way for theories of social relationship. He cites Fromm as developing the idea of the ‘social character’ where ideally, through family socialization, the individual’s psychology can be fulfilled as one with her social activity, embodying that individual’s version of relatedness to the world. This is resonant with the anthropological notion of ‘pattern of culture,’ a learned system of feeling and acting, in a particular society. These help to place in perspective our particular historical notion of the abstracted individual, yet as Williams points out, these cannot account theoretically for the force and divergence of individual character and the divergent patterns of social groups within a society. Even if we settle on accepting an innate range of temperaments, and the teaching of whole patterns containing elements that meet both individual and social needs, we will still have particular individuals who may not conform to these patterns and will therefore play the part in the social process of changing the pattern by his or her responses.

But how does this individuation occur, asks Williams? Where social psychology once saw the individual as preceding society, we now can register that awareness of self as a separate being is actually learned by the infant (as we see reflected in the account of Winnicott’s work below). Beyond this shared fact among all individuals of separating out, the specific making of our ‘selves,’ as in our differences, arises in social experience. Within the operating cultural pattern or disparate patterns that we encounter, our innate potentialities further interact with our unique social histories, all producing our autonomous individuality capable of self-direction and of thereby modifying , in turn, the social process that has influenced us. We
get a sense of this process in the the work of Gabor Mate cited below. Likewise the divergent groups within society are continually relating both within themselves and with the larger society and thus reshaping their own patterns, as elaborated by Williams (1961).

Despite these complex processes and the ongoing cultural reconstitutions which they yield, Williams points out that we have persisted in discussing these relations of the individual and society in terms of the simplistic model of conformity or nonconformity. Williams endeavours to extend the vocabulary for discussing this relation. In terms of conformity, he suggests the categories of member, subject or servant, reflecting varying levels of conscious alignment with, or at least an acceptance of the need to serve the values of the culture. For positions of nonconformity, he describes the rebel who, like the member, seeks a particular social form even if the present one is not the one she observes. Likewise, he sees the reformer and critic as essentially seeking to alter conditions within existing forms. The revolutionary’s position is one of declared opposition and struggle for a new way of life. The exile and vagrant, he suggests, are the more truly individual forms. Unlike the subject, the exile has managed to get away but often cannot return, yet can often not form relationships with the society she has escaped to. Unlike the rebel, she is not contributing to processes of change. The self-exile, on the other hand, stays in her society but remains separate within it, knowing herself to be different, notionally involved in relationship, for she wants the society to change so that she can belong to it, yet is in a state of tension because she cannot join in actual dissent for fear of being caught and compromised in the authentic living pattern which she must at all costs defend. Thus it is difficult for this authenticity to be shared or communicated with others. Finally, there is the vagrant, for whom her society’s values have no meaning. She essentially wants to be left alone, often finding as little meaning in herself as in her society. It is the condition of society itself that is meaningless and she will simply do what is necessary to survive in it. Williams suggests that in our times, the vagrant position may be one of the main ones available to us, operative behind the appearances of many lives: any position is meaningless, responses are adopted for expedience, and there is no deeper, meaningful self. As Williams relays, the societies in which these responses occur are themselves varied, not fixed, so that, though these categories may sound simplistic by our contemporary views, the essential thing here that Williams is getting at is again the active organization of action and interaction. Often these relations are a compound because there exist alternate groups within any society in which individuals can find social membership. Or else the individual may move through various stages of organization during a lifetime.
The Individual and Hegemony

I would understand Williams’ valuation of the vagrant position as one of the main ones available to us, to describe a situation where hegemony is so effective, for instance through the effects of our model of work and the way it shapes our lives (see Part Three), that we have not even a conscious perception of how we are related to society. In terms of evaluating these type sketches half a century later, I would observe that at the time of writing this, 1958, Williams had not yet encountered Gramsci’s notion of hegemony (Storey, 2010). The sketches are valuable, beyond their psychological insight and narrative appeal, from the perspective of critical theory, as they can be read for how individual patterns and psychologies intersect and mesh with hegemonic social influences, and serve to reinforce them.

Storey (2010) reminds us,

> Hegemony involves a specific kind of consensus, a consensus in which a social group presents its own particular interests as the general interests of the society as a whole; it turns the particular into the general. Hegemony works by the transformation of potential antagonism into simple difference. This works in part by the circulation of meanings, meanings which reinforce dominance and subordination by seeking to fix the meaning of social relations. (39)

The social is saturated with meanings that support the prevailing power structures. As Williams puts it more frighteningly, despite the fact there is always resistance, *it thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people* ... (quoted by Storey, 2010, 39). This prompts questions such as: are the values of modern capitalism, such as profit motivation and unmeasured consumption, not by definition hegemonic in their intention and effect? In other words, isn’t their hegemonic influence and manipulative power the very extension of such values and the structures and institutions that embody and convey them? Don’t such values intrinsically want, need, and inherently *have* potent manipulative capacity, to subsume all other values within themselves? Whereas alternate values such as, say, ‘from each according to this ability, to each according to her need,’ would seem to logically extend themselves, *or not*, through such mechanisms as appeal to reason, humanity, personal discernment, and the prospect of beneficial effect to all. I am suggesting that cultural contexts rooted in such intrinsically hegemonic values, will themselves tend to shape the kinds of individuals that emerge within them, so that they will rarely be coming from a ‘neutral’ or open position in such a context. We are already weighted in favour of emerging unconsciously as, in terms of Williams’ types, a member or a subject, not because it authentically expresses us but because of
our shaping by these forces. Or alternately expressed, we are likely to be compelled to enact the modes of *seeming* and *imposing* formulated by Buber (1992[1965], 72). We have perhaps even historically evolved these responses as part of the very way individuality is constituted within capitalist culture. Put another way, the rebel or exile in such hegemonic societies as ours, must be all the more truly individual to adopt and live out such authentic responses. (I am of course taking for granted the existence of many other positions or subcultures on this continuum, such as religious ones, that will seek to reproduce their values within their adherents, but nonetheless might accept and engage with the larger culture to a given degree.)

Extending this line of thought, I suggest that popularly recognized social-psychological tendencies such as what we call groupthink, conditioned by innate but socially-constructed variations of the need for belonging and identity, act as a subset and effective tool of hegemonic effect. As above, I would see this as continuous with the very way we have tendered individuality and its ‘psychologies’ in our culture. That is, further to Williams’ account of how the very conception of the individual evolved alongside and as an extension of capitalist perspectives, capitulated through the parallel notion of entrepreneurial free enterprise and freely chosen identity/occupation, we can surmise logically that such individuals will themselves tend to act as hegemonic forces in such societies, seeking for others to confirm and reflect their values in personal, work and community contexts. Work, as we will see in Part Three, is indeed one of the key cultural settings where hegemony shapes our lives (it can also be where resistance is most enacted) and where, to ‘work’ against its norms can seriously threaten our livelihood, so that ‘seeming’ may be an essential, adaptive matter of our very survival. We have all seen or personally experienced examples of this where individuals in such settings typically end up being marginalized or ostracized if they are not a ‘good fit.’ Put another way, the notion of the individual, as the mirroring microcosm of the kind of culture that birthed it, emerged almost by definition as a locus oriented to *ego*, that is (in keeping with capitalist values) characterized by a striving for what will most ‘profit’ us whether financially or in terms of identity or image, an orientation to competitive comparison with others, and a notion of ‘freedom’ construed as freedom to compete, dominate, assume, and consume, rather than freedom as in dialogue with responsibility.

A further nuance of these layers of hegemonic effects, not much explored I think (what ‘discipline’ would explore it?) are the tensions and paradoxes encountered when they play out at the level of the family. In these instances, we must – partly deliberately, partly unconsciously – internalize hegemonic influences as a fundamental adaptive, if not saving, psychological measure as we are maturing, simply to sustain either a psychic state of functional integration or to sustain a functioning acceptance within our very families.
Then again, in maturity we may have to turn back to negotiate ways of relating to a family who perpetuates such values even if we do not. At a deeper level still, we must continually recognize and negotiate these internalized presences in ourselves. Williams (1989) himself crucially registers this experience in the context of his answer to incessant queries through his career of whether he was a Marxist and of his ‘underestimating the enemy’:

I learned the experience of incorporation, I learned the reality of hegemony, I learned the saturating power of the structures of feeling of a given society, as much from my own mind and my own experience as from observing the lives of others. All through our lives, if we make the effort, we uncover layers of this kind of alien formation in ourselves, and deep in ourselves. So then the recognition of it is a recognition of large elements in our own experience, which have to be – shall we say it? – defeated. But to defeat something like that in yourself, in your families, in your neighbours, in your friends, to defeat it involves something very different, it seems to me, from most traditional political strategies. (75)

These observations circularly reinforce Buber’s emphasis on the crucial significance of the intrapersonal and interpersonal realms, and to the larger discussions of community above by both Buber and Bookchin. Only as individuals can we negotiate the encounter with the values of our family members or community, recognizing as we must that any of us can be deeply conditioned to defensively live out inherited values. As Williams fittingly asks, how can political strategies meet this? Here, short of personal or social circumstances that awaken consciousness, clearly the energies of love and unconditional acceptance, that is, the realm of awareness that is antithetical to those of the dominant power structures and the hegemony they engender, come into play as primary values exerting their own force as living examples. In Williams’ words which clearly echo these valuations of the interpersonal:

...we have to learn and to teach each other the connections between a political and economic formation, a cultural and educational formation, and, perhaps hardest of all, the formations of feeling and relationship which are our immediate resources in any struggle.

(76)

Ultimately, Williams’ reflections on the individual and society can help recover our understanding of the relatedness at the heart of these definitions—individual, community, society. He reminds us that each arose as abstracted definitions in their historical turn, held emphasis for a time, and through their
abstraction, allowed us to consider their relation to the larger organization of which they are inseparably a part: the servant and the establishment, the rebel and the tyrannical society, the subject and the imposed system, each opposition is one whole interaction. Gradually fixed into objects, each description in truth represents a living dialectical process of growth, allowing humanity to evolve in its capacity and self-understanding. In our historical moment he suggests we need to recognize the limits of individualism as well as the gains. *Individualism has passed into selfishness and indifference by the facts of its own incompleteness*, Williams (1961) claims, in our turning away from the generalized other and belying the fact of relationship (95). Just as we isolate the individual, we likewise divide her into body, mind and soul. Rather, and here echoing the thought of Bateson, he notes that, *Organization... is enacted in the organism, and to know either fully is to know the other* (98).

Connecting up these reflections with the earlier account of Williams’ (1961) work on the processes of creativity, description and communication, we can sense into the ways we as individuals are continually interacting with, creating or transforming our cultural patterns, to the varying degrees that we as individuals self-realize or have the capacity to describe. This fact of our individual uniqueness and the consequent continuous iteration and reiteration of culture, Williams registers crucially, is the foundational case for a participating democracy as the only social organization adequate to our nature. Thus, we also are able to gather from these reflections the richness of individualities that can populate a community that holds the tensions between convergence and difference. As Fischlin and Nandorfy (2012) write:

> What if the defining feature of community were not the common ties that are said, proverbially, to bind but instead the very differences that make community in its most achieved state an unsettled, self-critical, processual coming-into-being based on constantly shifting relational contingencies and embodiments of encounter? What if the ties that bind are in fact the differences that erupt and the ways in which these differences are negotiated in a manner that creatively allows differential forms of potential to be enacted in an ethical and contingent manner? Is community more a function of alterity than commonality? Is the rupture between the self-same and difference the very thing that gives community meaning? (111)

This consideration of the individual has also led us to see that in the context of our capitalist culture, hegemony works by several mutually-reinforcing and obscuring layers of affect that we are not cued to perceive or challenge. This implies that recognition of these forces becomes a special and intrinsic concern in how we conceive and unfold our individualities. To invert Williams’ comment – in a truly
democratic culture, these effects would be confronted and explored throughout our educational institutions. Such condensed insight as Williams’ comment on the rationale for human democracy can catalyze a jolt of perception concerning the fact and question of democracy as the foundation of our social life – what on the one hand we so take for granted, and on the other, whose real structure in our culture differs so crucially from the meanings Williams, Bookchin and others might envision.

**Herbert Marcuse – Protective Care of Living Things**

Herbert Marcuse (1992) posited a much darker vision of our cultural hegemony, citing the predominance of an *affirmative character structure*, so deeply have the needs and wants imposed by our institutions been internalized as our own (32). His account stresses that our system is able to achieve this level of conformity because it has satisfied our material needs to a sufficient degree, which pre-empts the rise of what he calls the *radical character structure* needed to effect social change (32). He defines this radical character in Freudian terms as possessing a preponderance of life instincts over death instincts. Marcuse asserts what he sees as the prevalence of a destructive character structure in our time and that our social psychology is inseparable from its basis in this individual psychology. This view can be seen to pose a challenge to how Bookchin’s radicalized consciousness comes about.

I refer to the existence of a high standard of living for the majority of the privileged population, and to a considerably relaxed social and sexual morality. These facts, to a considerable extent, compensate for the intensified alienation in work and leisure which characterizes this society. In other words, conformist consciousness provides not only an imaginary compensation but also a real one. This militates against the rise of a radical character structure. (32)

Marcuse further attributes the fact that these introjected values would see us support them even to the point where self-destruction is threatened, insinuating the fact of our ecological crisis. But the frightening element here is that as he sees it, this pervasive destructiveness is *obscured and anaesthetized by the fact that destruction itself is internally joined to production and productivity. The latter, even as it consumes and destroys human and natural resources, also increases the material and cultural satisfactions available to the majority of the people* (33).

Marcuse acknowledges the real presence of emancipatory needs within us, and the potential for social change, over and against Freud’s theorization of our drive for the painlessness of life in the womb, which in Freud’s view, becomes displaced on to destructiveness of others. Marcuse chooses rather to mark the
emergence of the ecology movement, feminism, citizen initiatives, the essential conjoining of the personal and political, and the journey into personal analysis and therapy, as affirming the life instincts and enacting both psychological and political liberation (as opposed to the traditional neglect of the individual in radical politics). Fulfillment through this lens, for Marcuse (1992) would arise rather from protective care of living things (36). He differentiates the crucial features of these new movements as the politicization of erotic energy and as an existential revolt against an obsolete reality principle, in their seeking of much deeper human rights and goals, rather than replacing one power structure with another. In the same breath, Marcuse seems to lament what he anticipates as the poor prospects for these groups, seeing their sensitivity as being no match for the forces of domination and lacking the force of more traditional ‘radical’ organizations whose political praxis through unions and political parties can achieve more ‘realistic’ goals. He is not however acceding defeat, but (in 1992 shortly before his death) signalling that such reorientation may help to redefine the human goal of radical change...as the emergence of human beings who are physically and mentally incapable of inventing another Auschwitz (37).

Such forceful and provocative narratives as these are valuable for registering the underlying structures at work in our culture, where it is all too easy to fall on the side of an almost wilfully forgetful or aneasthetized state in everyday life. These are cultural ‘stories’ we need to hear and heed. Yet the oppositional rhetoric here, appealing to our very justified sense of horror at the worst atrocities of western culture (and we were on the threshold that year of more to come in Africa and Eastern Europe), if an effective catalyst, cannot be taken as a guide for action as it is neither programmatic nor offers anything concretely for that purpose. Further Joel Kovel (Marcuse, 1992) asks, Where is the Other in Marcuse, or intersubjectivity? Where is the foundation of sociality in this body which supposedly strives to protect nature (42)? In his indictment of hegemony and its ‘affirmative character structure,’ Marcuse unflinchingly makes the crucial link through to the individual, which we now must follow. But such individuals, such tendencies, do not arise from a vacuum. To engender the profound and radical change that Marcuse and many others see as necessary, surely such an instinct of life must be deeply rooted within the individual. We would as humans in such a society founded on alternate values, hope for an individualism that is oriented not towards ego or to destruction, but as a locus for truthfulness, self-determination, the techniques of care, self-group integrity and availability to community, within a truly participatory democracy. Freedom would be understood in this context as relative to larger values such as well-being for all and for the planet. The interpersonal seeming discussed by Buber would not be called upon as either a survival mechanism to retain one’s livelihood, nor needed in order to belong to one’s place or community. Here and now, in terms of responding to this historical moment in which we find
ourselves, what can those who are striving to take an individual stance hope to do? Beyond openness to
dialogue within the interpersonal realm, beyond turning to our families with the same efforts at tolerance,
how can we support or create conditions for such an instinct of life?

Marcuse, considering the histories he lived through (Nazism in Europe), perhaps did not focus on the
matters and techniques of birth and childcare or perhaps did not go that far, though he embraced the
essential place of the lived body as acknowledged in the new movements then emerging. Below, we will
explore the work of British paediatrician and psychoanalyst, D.W. Winnicott (1896 – 1971). In
Winnicott’s influential thought on parenting, care of the infant, and ideas of health, we are reminded of
where the “protective care for living things” most often and ideally begins (Marcuse, 1992, 36). This
account acts also to iterate childcare and psychological development not as a specialist subject but as a
common and crucial social concern.

D.W. Winnicott – Where Care Begins

The work of D.W. Winnicott (1988, 2002) can contribute much to our consideration of what conditions a
culture of care at all levels. Winnicott’s aetiology of the self and its foundation in holding, resonate deeply
with Bateson’s (1972) emphasis on human trust and our mammal hearts (275). Winnicott’s work deserves
to be read beyond academic or parental audiences as a poetics of human care. His insight, like Williams,’
catches in its vision the total social fabric, allowing us to see the links between for example, the way a
child learns right from wrong and the fact of the family being ‘the only factory for democracy’ (Winnicott,
2002, 203). The whole is grasped before anything, and only then its minute constituents unravelled down
to the essential significance of, for instance, how the infant is held. We can surmise, extrapolate, intuit,
where Winnicott’s work joins up with Bateson’s, regarding how we learn the handling of frames and
paradoxes, and what conditions lead to disturbances such as schizophrenia. We can imaginatively link
Buber’s interpersonal realm – the defensive strategies of what he calls imposing and seeming or the
capacity for true encounter and dialogue—to the successes or failures of integration and authenticity
enabled in the child by parental and environmental provision (Buber, 1992[1965], 72). We can see how
our creativity works to overcome poor provision and disturbances in development, as suggested by
Bateson (1972, 278).

Because Winnicott’s way of speaking and writing communicates so richly and clearly (reflecting the
nature of his work and particular gifts), I have chosen to express his work through short paraphrased
narrative selections, along with many actual quoted statements. The selections, most written in the 60s, are those which I feel most effectively communicate his grasp of the continuum of body and psyche.

Most of us can find a direct line to sense into Winnicott’s work. We have all heard a baby cry in a way that makes the blood curdle with an instinctive response to the urgent need expressed through that cry. When it is our own child, we hope to be able to answer it. When the baby is someone else’s, we hope upon hope that it will be answered. Winnicott (2002) references the value of the anger (e.g. from distress of this kind) that does not (when it goes on too long) go over into despair. He stresses that we must have an aetiology of failure, not in order to blame the mother or hold her morally responsible, but because it is the only way we can know the positive value of the adaptation of the ordinary devoted mother to her infant’s needs (15).

Winnicott (2002) is cautious to disavow himself of any idealist notions of parenting:

I like to use the words ‘good enough’. Good enough parents can be used by babies and children, and good enough means you and me. In order to be consistent, and so to be predictable for our children, we must be ourselves. If we are ourselves our children can get to know us. Certainly if we are acting a part we shall be found out when we get caught without our make-up. (179)

Likewise he de-mystifies the early bond or oneness between mother (usually) and child, stressing that the ordinary devoted mother does not need excess instruction to do the work of this phase, but to be left to do what she knows well enough to do. Yet he conveys how critical it is for the child:

These things give the baby the opportunity to be, out of which there can arise the next things that have to do with action, doing and being done to. Here is the basis for what gradually becomes, for the infant, the self-experiencing being. All this is highly tenuous, but repeated and repeated adds up to the foundation of the capacity in the baby to feel real. (14)

We start with this beginning of everything and Winnicott likes to think of it as being and then later I am. He stresses that I am means nothing unless at the beginning I am along with another human being who has not yet been differentiated off. This reflects Williams’ discussion above on how the separating out of the individual occurs after the social.
It cannot be overemphasized that being is the beginning of everything, without which doing and being done to have no significance. It is possible to seduce a baby into feeding and into the functioning of all the bodily processes, but the baby does not feel these as an experience unless it is built on a quantity of simple being which is enough to establish the self that is eventually a person. (Winnicott, 2002, 17)

Winnicott makes the case that physiology and psychology are one; psychology is a gradual extension from physiology, whatever the argument about the date (in development) when that happens, so that what Winnicott calls primary maternal preoccupation is crucial. The prototype of all infant care is *holding*, with the meaning of that word stretched to its limits. This is significant because in the very early stages of emotional development, before the senses are organized and before there is something called an autonomous ego, severe anxieties are experienced (32-34).

...the word anxiety is of no use, the order of infant distress at this stage being of the same order as that which lies behind panic and panic is already a defence against the agony that makes people commit suicide rather than remember. I have meant to use strong language here. You see two infants; one has been held (in my extended sense of the word) well enough, and there is nothing to prevent a rapid emotional growth, according to inborn tendencies. The other has not had the experience of being held well and growth has had to be distorted and delayed, and some degree of primitive agony has had to be carried on into life and living. (34)

He continues:

Let it be said that in the common experience of good-enough holding the mother has been able to supply an auxiliary ego-function, so that the infant has had an ego from an early start, a very feeble, personal ego, but one boosted by the sensitive adaptation of the mother and by her ability to identify with her infant in relation to basic needs. The infant who has not had this experience has either needed to develop premature ego functioning, or else there has developed a muddle. (2002, 34)

The three main tasks in primitive emotional development are: integration of self corresponds to the mother’s function of holding; the psyche dwelling in the body corresponds to the mother’s handling; and object-relating corresponds to the mother’s object-presenting. Psychoanalysis provided a theory of emotional development but at first only touched on infantile matters in terms of dream symbolism,
imaginative play, symptomatology etc. Later it was found that the best research of infant psychology was in borderline schizophrenics because this relates to failure of the facilitating environment before the ego has the capacity to organize defences, but there is still a functioning personality able to do integrating tasks. The dependence is seen in full effect in the therapeutic situations, and observation of the ‘infant’ can be direct, though regression, though Winnicott allows fully for how the sophistication of the adult patient distorts the lens.

Winnicott stresses that maturation is a matter of integration.

Winnicott (2002) spells out the crucial fact of the Moro response, which is how a baby reacts when his or her head is dropped a little. It is exactly what a mother would not do to her infant: ...when she lifts him/her, she gathers him/her together (37). When the baby’s head is dropped, continuity of being (like a circle that is not aware of itself) is broken, making two disconnected circles (he quotes as if baby talking). So there is a personality split and premature awareness produced by the dropping of the head: ...it is just this mental pain that the schizophrenic carries round as a memory and as threat, and that makes suicide a sensible alternative to living (38). There are only a few of these primitive agonies. They include falling forever, all kinds of disintegration, and things that disunite the psyche and the body. Winnicott claims that in these borderline cases there is a drive towards progress in the emotional development that has been held up, to get in touch with the processes that spoilt it (39-40). Relating to all of this, Winnicott stresses how the importance of birth memories is enormous. He conveys an account of a schizophrenic girl with a very high I.Q. who had started on the wrong foot because of her mother’s pregnancy and birth complications. She came to him for treatment asking him to help her commit suicide for the right reason instead of the wrong reason (40). In the end, after borrowing his copy of Rank’s Trauma of Birth, and a consequent dream she had, she did commit suicide.

On Holding and Handling

Insult is the word that conveys the effect of bad holding on the baby...Be sure, these insults do matter. In our work with older children and adults we find these insults add up to a sense of insecurity as well as the other thing which is that the process of development is held up by the reactions to insult which fragment the thread of continuity that is the child (2002, 51).
On Feeding

When the mother and baby come to terms with each other in the feeding situation, this is initiation of a human relationship. This sets the pattern for the child’s capacity for relating to object and to the world.

The mother knows that the basis of feeding is not feeding. It is an insult, or shall I say a kind of rape, when an exasperated nurse pushes the mother’s nipple or the nipple of the bottle into the baby’s mouth and starts up a reflex. No mother left on her own would do this. (2002, 52)

Winnicott (2002) conveys the importance of the period of time needed before the baby begins to search, stressing that he/she needs to play around. This is the beginning not just of feeding; it is the beginning of object-relating. There is the paradox that what the baby creates was already there, part of the mother which was found. It is found only because of the mother’s being there in the way and place, and at the moment needed. This is called adaptation to need, which enables the baby to discover the world creatively (53).

Winnicott discusses the balance between security and freedom as children develop. This is a matter he stresses, that should never be about mechanical control or about fear as a motive for compliance. It is always a living relationship between persons that gives the necessary elbow room which true growth needs. True growth carries the child or adolescent on to an adult sense of responsibility, especially a responsibility for the provision of secure conditions for the small children of a new generation. Isn’t it possible to see all this going on in the work of creative artists of all kinds? They do something very valuable for us because they are constantly creating new forms and breaking through these forms to create new ones. Artists enable us to keep alive when the experiences of real life often threaten to destroy our sense of being really alive and real in a living way. Artists of all people best remind us that the struggle between our impulses and the sense of security (both of which are vital to us) is an eternal and lifelong struggle (158).

He continues

In health then, children develop enough belief in themselves and in other people to hate external controls of all kinds; controls have changed over into self-control. In self-control the conflict has been worked through within the person in advance. So I see it this way: good conditions in the early stages lead to a sense of security, and a sense of security leads on to self-control, and when self-control is a fact, then security that is imposed is an insult. (159)
On the development of a child’s sense of right and wrong:

I just want to say that the basis of morality is the baby’s fundamental experience of being his or her own true self, of going on being; reacting to the unpredictable breaks up this going on being, and interferes with the development of a self. (Winnicott, 2002, 167)

Winnicott describes the child’s sense of morality as not taking over from the parents’ moral sense but a new moral sense, starting up as it should in the case of each new individual. Sorting out what feels good and what feels bad is rooted in the child’s sense of guilt, that is, the balance of relating constructive behaviour with anxiety about destruction and the capacity for mending. In fact, the innate morality of the infant, as it develops out of crude fears, is much more fierce than the morality of the mother and father. Only what is true and real counts for the infant (169).

He continues:

...you are making it possible for your infant to develop a sense of right and wrong by your being a reliable person in this formative early phase of your infant’s living experiences. Insofar as each child has found his or her own guilt sense, so far and only so far, does it make sense for you to introduce your ideas of good and bad. (17)

Winnicott (2002) speaks of how the process of life for the child is the gradual emergence from enclosures – those of the parent, house, garden, nursery, school and so on, facing new risks each time, and how crucial is the way these thresholds are negotiated, how crucial for the child to be able to get back in to the enclosure at times of stress or illness. Then there is the crucial changeover where these largely subjective enclosures to the bigger world, school and on up, must give way to shared reality. A special transitional object may accompany the child into this larger world, such as a toy which links her back to the safe enclosure. In times of anxiety, a return to infantile patterns will provide assurance, as long as the parent is alive and available. This coming out of enclosures progresses of course until we are a citizen of the world. Winnicott is stressing the crucial awareness of these passages in the first five years of life, in the face of a culture that for instance, can distort the child’s responses to stressful events, calling a small child ‘resilient.’ He proposes that we can only rightly see resilience as coming with growth and maturity. There is no time in the development of a child at which it could be said that the child is resilient (172).
On what we need to be taught as parents

Winnicott (2002) feels there is a limit to the value of being taught and parents do not need to know everything. What do they need to know? They need to know about the process of growth – that is, how all the inherited tendencies are already there and every child will be different; they need to know about environmental provision, which is our responsibility. Life consists in the interaction of these two things; reading these is the only reasonable way to measure your child’s struggle towards independence (rather than comparing to some given standard, of your own or handed to you). We can only follow our child through all the stresses associated with the internal process of emotional growth— ambivalence, instinctual drives and so on, and we cannot expect to be psycho-therapists. But environmental provision is the area we should learn about, that is the key factors of predictability and reliability that build up the capacity for trust. For instance, we need to know how separation in hospital affects a child and such-like. Though we take such awareness for granted, when Winnicott was writing in the 60s, this was radical thinking. Winnicott simply and powerfully depicts the effects of such interruption and separation in the child when continuity in the environment is broken:

After this the child has a gap in the line between now and the roots of the past. There has to be a new start. Too many of these new starts result in a failure in the child of the feeling I am, this is me, I exist, it is I who love and hate, it is me that people see and that I see in mother’s face when she comes, or in the mirror. Growth processes become distorted because the child’s integrity has broken up. (185)

Interestingly even in 1969 Winnicott goes on to note that it is in our own sophisticated cultures that these breaches tend to occur, with the consequent loss of a clear sense of I am, I am me, I exist here and now, on this basis I can enter into the lives of others, and without a sense of threat to my own basis for being myself (185).

These failures of the environment can be described in terms of unreliability, destruction of trust, the letting in of unpredictability, and a once and for all or a repeat pattern of the breakup of the continuity of the individual child’s line of life. On the whole those who care for children are found by careful selection, not taught in class. (186)

Winnicott defines health as being maturity that accords with the period of life. He asks, can the individual achieve emotional maturity except in the setting of the family? He refers to
...the human need for a steadily widening circle for the care of the individual, and also by
the need the individual has for a place into which a contribution can be made from time to
time when the individual has the urge to be creative, or to be generous. All these ever-
widening circles are the mother’s lap and her concern. (Winnicott, 2002, 208)

He believes it is only within the family, of whatever form, that we can successfully negotiate the
progressive need to both defiantly break away into wider enclosures (for instance in adolescence) and yet
rely on being able to return, to rely on an environment where it is safe to hate. Winnicott notes how we
can take the effect of the intact family for granted and only when it is not intact or threatens to break do
we then notice how important it is. The breakdown of its structure does not necessarily lead to clinical
illness in children. It can lead to premature emotional growth, precocious independence and sense of
responsibility and so on, but as Winnicott points out this is not what we are calling maturity at age, and it
is not health even if it has healthy features (208-210). In summary, Winnicott claims that the family
contributes to maturity in the individual in two ways: the continued existence of the opportunity for
dependence of a high degree; and the provision for the opportunity to break away from the parents to the
family, and out into ever-widening circles.

These ever-widening circles, which eventually become political or religious or cultural groupings in
society, or perhaps even nationalism itself, are the end-product of something that starts off with maternal
care, or parental care, and then continues as the family. (213)

It could be said that the mature adult is able to identify himself or herself with environmental groupings or
institutions, and to do so without loss of a sense of personal going-on being, and without too great a
sacrifice of spontaneous impulse, this being at the root of creativity. (214)

An important feature is the individual’s capacity, after each example of iconoclastic acting out, to
rediscover in the broken-up forms the original maternal care and parental provision and family stability,
all of that on which the individual was dependent in the early stages. (214)

Mature adults bring vitality to that which is ancient, old, and orthodox by re-creating it after destroying it.
And so the parents move up a step, and move down a step, and become grandparents (214).

On the development of the capacity for concern,

Concern refers to the fact that the individual cares, or minds, and both feels and accepts
responsibility. At the genital level in the statement of the theory of development, concern
could be said to be the basis of the family, where both partners in intercourse – beyond their pleasure – take responsibility for the result. But in the total imaginative life of the individual, the subject of concern raises even wider issues, and a capacity for concern is at the back of all constructive play and work. It belongs to normal, healthy living, and deserves the attention of the psychoanalyst. (Winnicott, 2002, 215)

(He goes further into the precise psychoanalytic transactions that give rise to this, and notes...it was the opportunity to contribute that enabled concern to be within the child’s capacity (219).)

Winnicott (1988) stresses that the development of concern is a complex maturational process which already presupposes a good-enough environment and good-enough infant care; a capacity for concern can only be founded on these. Babies can survive without this environmental provision but with something vital missing in their emotional development. ...the result is a restlessness and a lack of capacity for concern, a lack of depth, and an incapacity for constructive play and eventually an inability to work; with a result that is unsatisfactory both to the individual and society (155).

Children Learning

On loyalty and disloyalty,

Eventually, if one goes back, one can see that these disloyalities, as I am calling them, are an essential feature of living, and they stem from the fact that it is disloyal to everything that is not oneself if one is to be oneself. The most aggressive and therefore the most dangerous words in the languages of the world are to be found in the assertion I AM. It has to be admitted, however, that only those who have reached a stage at which they can make this assertion are really qualified as adult members of society (231).

He notes that it took the analytic world a long time to look at the importance of the way a baby is held:

If you have got a child’s head and body in your hands and do not think of that as a unity, and reach for a handkerchief or something, then the head has gone back and the child is in two pieces—head and body; the child screams and never forgets it....they remember that suddenly the continuity of their life was snapped...And they have got to go round with it, and if that is the pattern of their care, it builds up into a lack of confidence in the environment (235).
Winnicott (2002) stresses how crucial holding and handling is in the issue of human reliability for the infant. The child can keep the image of a mother or father alive for a number of minutes only, then that image wilts and dies within the child. If the mother returns two hours later, she is a different person. He recounts how adults consequently become babies and children in the course of treatment, in order to heal. One 55 year-old woman, for instance, must see him three times a week in order to keep the image of him alive. Otherwise, she would rather die. He adds, about dealing with these situations in therapy that, I have to pretend to be more grown up than I am to deal with this (236).

This care, experienced or not, leads directly to what we have capacity to believe in, to come to our own personal sense of what is right and wrong. We can break across and rob a child of that capacity in many cases in saying you’re not to do that, it’s wrong. His point here is in relation to children’s learning: that what you teach can only be implanted on what capacity is already present, based on the early experiences and on the continuation of reliable holding in terms of the ever-widening circle of family and school and social life (238).

Drawing out the full implications of such parental care, Winnicott cites the enormous contribution of the mother to society, through the work of simple devotion to her child, especially in the weeks before and following birth, which, he says, ...provides the only real basis for society, and the only factory for the democratic tendency in a country’s social system (203). Winnicott wonders whether this is so unrecognized, so taken for granted, precisely because it is so immense: the fact that any sane, happy person, who feels fully like a person in the world, is in infinite debt to a woman. Winnicott then crucially proposes the links between society’s difficulty in fully recognizing this and fear of that total dependence, and implicitly then, fear of women and of domination. Such fear blocks both human progress and regression, and can in turn be seen as the root of domination of others. And as Winnicott puts it succinctly, the result of such recognition would not be gratitude or praise, but a lessening in ourselves of a fear (203). Written in 1957, this analysis, in one stroke linking the personal and political, strikingly pre-dates much of the feminist movement and its theorizing of the characteristics of patriarchal culture, or at the least fully aligns itself with their concerns. Here is the social rationale in Winnicott’s view, for this research into the very early stages of the infant-mother relationship.

Implications of Winnicott’s Work for Counterhegemonic Discourse

Is it our own western culture more than any other where these attitudes prevail that carry the thread from distanced parenting to fear of women to domination of other cultures? It is intrinsic again to the very
nature of capitalist culture that such techniques of care and the time and attention they imply, are literally written over by capitalist institutions and material structures. Our models of work, medicine and education all play a part in obstructing support of parents in such tasks of care. And for the mother herself, because of her maternal preoccupation and because of the hegemonical force of the medical system, it is very difficult to protest at the time when it is happening. (None of this, of course, is to deny the crucial role of the father as parent.)

We can reason and intuit strong links between Winnicott’s work and that of many other thinkers present here, and intuit their implications for weaving our social fabric and the very structure of feeling of our culture. We can reflect that Buber’s confirming of the other is co-extensive with such ‘holding in ever wider enclosures’ that Winnicott posits as the foundation of mental health, and that both would culminate in turn in the kind of good-enough parenting that Winnicott describes (Buber, 1992[1965], 72; Winnicott, 2002, 238). We can hope that all of us would ideally begin by being along with /and being, before doing and being done-to. Yet we can see how experiences such as the teaching that imposes, described by Buber, is, in its many forms, reflective of the being-done-to that is pervasive in our culture (Buber, 1992[1965], 74; Winnicott, 2002, 14). Likewise we can reason that the enabled development of a personal sense of right and wrong and the capacity for concern ramifies into an active encompassing of acts and techniques of care in all realms of life and, as crucially, the instinctive recognition of their absence or violation and action in the face of it, expressing what Marcuse (1992) would call a radical character structure (32). Would a child raised with such foundational care and confirming even be capable of, for instance, bullying another child? From Winnicott’s accounts we can see easily and perhaps ominously how, when continuity and the essential experience of trust are broken, we end with what Bateson (1972) pointedly describes as the severe pain and maladjustment that can be induced by putting a mammal in the wrong regarding its rules for making sense of an important relationship with another mammal. We can only then hope that, as Bateson continues..... if this pathology can be warded off or resisted, the total experience may promote creativity (278).

How can this formulation of human development by Winnicott matter to counterhegemonic discourse? This profoundly empathetic poetics of care and of becoming has much to contribute to understanding how our quality of care ramifies in interpersonal and social attitudes and behaviours throughout life. It would seem essential for such knowing to be both inherent and transmitted within our education and medical systems, so that we know the fundamentals of parenting and child development. Further, these insights matter more than ever because so much of contemporary experience works against the well being of the
family and child (Adkin, 1998; Mate, 2010). I would observe that much in our current models of parenting, education, work and health, almost precisely foster and celebrate forms of precocious independence in children, that is, the false maturity that Winnicott cites above. Through an environmental hegemony present even in the home where we can most regulate life as we wish, unless we actively choose otherwise, our children are often raised amid the drone of technology, from computers to loud, recorded music and television, and usually before their senses and stage of development are able to truly mediate such affects. It is hard to imagine a more extreme example of being done-to, with this bombardment of our senses, psyche and interior life from an early age. This occurs at several levels: in terms of the sense bombardment itself, the actual content, and the implicit suggestion that children engage with these technologies as ‘givens.’ Babies are surrounded with toys and contraptions that mimic all these technologies, whether to ‘teach’ them something or to hasten their walking, in any case to impose over their innate growth. Within our educational systems, from an increasingly young age, academic achievement is hastened and displaces physical play. Intellectual information supercedes real teaching and story, and much of it both inside and outside the home comes from the internet. Sexuality is hastened and distorted by suggestive content that permeates all our media as a matter of course. Being and continuity of being and interior life seem to have little valuation or chance with such influences. Time, experienced as a pattern and rhythm of activity and rest, of night and day, is flattened into an exhausting stream of endless activity.

Then there is the loss of everything that such environmental imposition pre-empts as the child grows into the teenager and adult: silence, physical activity, creative projects, conversation, reading, and many other everyday and life skills that might be of value. Beyond pre-empting the time needed to develop these capacities, the content conveyed through our pervasive media presences serves to inculcate us with the values of the dominant system, conveying life as consumption and commodity (though often masked differently). Thus, not only does parenting need to be equipped with knowledge so often lacking but a high degree of sustained resistance is required by the parents to avert such influences. Moreover, the hegemonical influences coming from media, peers, school, other families, and just about everywhere can often construe any parental monitoring or resistance over these presences as extremes or strictness. Parents must have the will and energy to discern these choices and bring the values they choose into family life, against all odds, and while their lives are determined by models of work that exhaust them for making such choices, and yet which themselves exert hegemonic effect. These are among the facts of social life in our time.
Social Life and Self-Identity in the Context of Globalization

Moving from the psychological formation of the self to issues of social psychology, what characterizes social life in our time? What are the experiences of the individual, self-identity and family when there is such focus on the individual in our culture as presently construed? How do we register and respond to hegemonic values, including those we discover within ourselves and our families?

Giddens (2000[1999]), the British sociologist, argues that with globalization and the associated loss of tradition, the very basis of our self-identity changes. It is no longer sustained by stable social definitions and traditions but has to be repeatedly re-created. He suggests that Freud’s work was in effect constructing a method for renewal of self-identity in the early stages of a detraditionalizing culture. In psychoanalysis, the individual revisits the past to achieve a more autonomous future. This is the same process as in pervasive self-help groups and approaches such as Alcoholic Anonymous (AA), where individuals recover by rewriting the story-line of their lives.

Likewise Giddens (2000[1999]) posits the force of fundamentalism as ‘a child of globalization,’ and as differentiated from fanaticism. He sees it is as tradition defended in the traditional way, not about the actual content of the beliefs – whether religious, ethnic, nationalist or political – but about how they are defended or asserted. And nor is it about resistance to westernization, but, able to make use of new communication technologies, fundamentalism becomes edged with the possibility of violence, the ‘enemy of cosmopolitan values’ (68). Further, it also challenges modernity, posing the question, can we live in a world where nothing is sacred? Giddens believes not, and suggests that cosmopolitan values such as tolerance and dialogue along with morality, themselves need to be driven by passion and defended. We have nothing to live for if nothing to die for.

Zeroing in on impacts of globalization on the family as a site for the struggle between tradition and modernity, and a metaphor for them, Giddens asserts that there is a global revolution going on in how we think of ourselves and make ties with others. He describes these as among the most difficult transformations of what he terms a ‘runaway world’ (2000 [1999]). We can tune out from larger problems distant from us, but not from our immediate emotional lives. These transformations are happening nearly everywhere except where they are repressed by authoritarian governments. There is more nostalgia surrounding the family than any other institution, yet Giddens reminds us that the traditional family was above all an economic unit bearing an intrinsic inequality of men and women and children too. Sexuality was dominated by reproduction with antagonism towards homosexuality and a dualistic view of women.
Now sexuality is almost totally separated from reproduction, and therefore no longer dominated by heterosexuality. What we now call the traditional family was in fact a late transitional phase in the 1950s. The family had ceased to be an economic entity, with romantic love replacing the economic contract as the basis of marriage. Men and women were more equal but still there was the stigma with divorce and few women in the work force. There have of course been many more changes since, especially the rise of the couple and coupledom. This idea of intimacy and emotional communication, and the idea of ‘relationships,’ is very recent. Marriage was previously more a state of nature. Our ideas about children and their protection have also radically altered. Children are rarer and it is more a distinct and specific decision to have them. The concerns we have about the effects of divorce and fatherlessness are part of this context of higher expectation. This quality of intimacy and communication is happening in the love relationship, the parent-child relationship, and in friendship. These ‘pure’ (in the ideal sense) relationships are based on trust and openness. Giddens (2000[1999]) posits this characteristic as parallel with public democracy, that is, the equality of rights and responsibilities and open dialogue. For Giddens, this points to the emergence of a ‘democracy of emotions’ (81). Such changes have occurred mainly in relation to western countries. Where the traditional family still dominates, he feels this emerging democracy of emotions is at the forefront of the struggle between fundamentalism and the cosmopolitanism described above, as such emotions are anathema to fundamentalist groups. He suggests that the persistence of the traditional family in many parts of the world is thus more worrisome than its decline because equality of the sexes, etc. are the most important forces promoting democracy and economic development in poorer countries. They are also important to happiness and fulfillment.

Giddens (1991) says that in the post-traditional order, self-identity is reflexive. It is not a quality of a moment, but an account of a person's life.

A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor - important though this is - in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self. (54)

Giddens (1991) discusses the sequestration of experience in our time. Modernity, with its emphasis on control and its colonizing of the future, is associated with an internally referential system of knowledge and power (including social life and nature). This is at the origin of the reflexive project of the self, that is, the creation of an internally referential lifespan as a separate segment of time, which is also separated
from the externalities of place, and from externalities such as pre-established ties to other individuals and groups. Previously, externalities of place and kinship were typically connected. The notion of ancestors, for instance, becomes difficult to recover. In modernity, our lifespan emerges as a trajectory primarily related to the individual’s projects and plans, which is structured around ‘open experience thresholds’ rather than ritualized passages, so that each transition can be an identity crisis. Giddens (1991) stresses that these dis-embedding mechanisms do not empty out the self but simply remove prior supports and allow the self greater mastery over social relations and contexts than in pre-modernity. These orientations have consequences on the level of moral experience, which he calls the *sequestration of experience*, especially with the radicalizing and globalizing of modern institutions and the expansion of surveillance (165). This brings a significant reordering of the public and private domains, and the establishing of civil society. The private and public spheres become opposed in two senses, both strongly influenced by modernity: 1) The differentiation of the state (public) and civil society, so that the private is that which resists the state’s surveillance activities, 2) What is kept from or revealed to, others (and not to be confused with erosion of public sphere existing in traditional times). The public is only fully distinguished from the private when a society of strangers is established, that is, when the notion of ‘stranger’ loses its meaning. This point echoes Raymond Williams’ (1973) registering the change that occurs when we no longer experience ‘knowable communities.’ Privacy and related psychological needs are also conditioned by the further differentiation in our time of childhood from adulthood, an important factor in the emergence of therapy and its connections to childhood learning. So we have privacy as the other side of the penetration of the state, and privacy as what may not be revealed; in both senses, the private is a creation of the public and vice versa. Each is part of newly emergent systems of internal referentiality, and a fundamental part of the transformation of intimacy. The psychological consequence of these first two is an increasing prominence of shame in relation to self-identity, as opposed to guilt. Giddens elaborates how, as opposed to Freud’s ideas on civilization/desire/etc., the characteristic movement of modernity for the individual is away from guilt (though guilt mechanisms remain important).

Processes of institutional sequestration in modernity appear in various areas and have the effect of removing basic aspects of life experiences, including moral crises, from the regularities of day-to-day life established by abstract systems of modernity. The term *sequestration of experience* refers to connected processes of concealment which set apart routines of ordinary life from: madness, criminality, sickness and death, sexuality and nature (Giddens, 1991, 165). Giddens’ argument is that the ontological security which modernity has purchased, depends on an institutional exclusion of social life from fundamental existential issues which raise central moral dilemmas for human beings. Giddens traces some historical
origins of areas of sequestration to identify some of processes of replacement of external by internal criteria in the constitution of modernity’s social systems. Madness, crime and poverty, before modernity, were seen as extrinsic features of human existence, not as social problems or as indicators of personal or social failure. By the early 18th century, the notion of the ‘poor’ encompassed widows, orphans, the sick, aged, and disabled and became a question of morally defined need, which demanded communal attention. It was still seen as tied to extrinsic considerations, such as treatment of criminality and vagabondage, and in 18th century America, treated as a matter of moral transgression, primarily religious. The idea of secular correction emerges only as part of broader processes where the social and natural worlds came to be seen as transformable and not merely given. So it was not so much social control as the emerging idea that things could be changed, that led to these conditions being set off as ‘deviant’ or capable of alteration. Special settings allowed this remedial treatment and also allowed social control on the outside. This became bound up with the idea that for instance, criminal behaviour came from life conditions and could be changed, leading to social change. So the first prisons were morally-based, a laboratory for social improvement. In this sense, prisons began to mimic modernity in extreme form. Early psychiatrists linked mental illness and insanity in the same way, with social factors, and were seen as one of the risks modern life brought to everyone. Thus asylums had curative aims at first, like prisons. This prevailing moral component soon took second place to other imperatives in both cases, namely, the concern for protection for the outside world.

Thus ‘deviance’ emerged as part of the internally referential systems of modernity, and was therefore defined in terms of control. Thereby social questions that link day-to-day tasks and general life-planning to existential issues are repressed. Our relationships with sickness and death are significant realms where this occurs. Hospitals only became separated out for separated-out sickness in the way that asylums and prisons did, with the professionalization of medicine, with similar consequences of concealment from view of these crucial life experiences. In addition, death has become a technical matter; the history of capital punishment turned death into pure ‘event.’ Passion, which once referred to the ecstasy and devotion of the religious realm and contact with cosmic forces, now became secularized and confined mainly to the sexual sphere, just as sexuality emerged as a distinct phenomenon. Giddens (1991) suggests this was not just to do with increasing moral conscience or repression (Freud/Foucault, etc.), but more about the reconstitution of sexuality in the emerging sphere of intimacy. Similarly, where eroticism had been conjoined to guilt, this was progressively replaced by the association of sexuality with self-identity and the propensity to shame. Thus, existential questions become institutionally repressed, while new fields of opportunity were created for social activity and personal development. Similarly, with the development
of the created environment, ‘nature’ comes to an end. We live in artificial environments in two senses: living in built environments and leaving the ‘countryside’ or ‘wilderness’ outside (though ‘nature’ within and without built environments are both cultivated); and in a second, more fundamental sense, nature is increasingly subject to human intervention. So the sequestration of experience is in some part the contrived outcome of a culture in which moral and aesthetic domains are held to be dissolved by the expansion of technical knowledge. It is also the unintended outcome of the structuring processes of modernity, whose internally referential systems lose contact with extrinsic criteria. What is the impact of sequestration of experience? The very routines that create our sense of ontological security in modern times become more fragile as they are revealed to be empty of moral meaning. We are therefore susceptible to being overwhelmed when existential dilemmas do happen to us. It constitutes a return of the repressed but when we no longer possess the resources to deal with it. Sequestration of experience is not all-enveloping and homogenous; it is complicated, contradictory and generates possibilities for reappropriation. We also have to consider the impact of mediated experience. Though these sequestered experiences come to us anyway through popular art forms, Giddens suggests that this ultimately probably furthers sequestration rather than overcomes it.

Narcissism (narcissism relates outside events to the needs and desires of the self and is a defense against infantile rage), Giddens (1991) states, stands in opposition to the commitment needed to sustain intimate relationships. It represents a preoccupation with sensuality and health, and can extend to an affinity with therapy which only encourages the self-focus. The reflexive project of the self occurs against a backdrop of moral impoverishment. It is then no wonder that such a heavy burden is placed on the realm of pure relationship, in compensating for this. The pre-eminent outlook on self in modern society is that which is seen as frail, fractured, and fragmented. Some views can be linked to poststructuralism which sees the self as ceasing to exist as more than a decentred subject. Many cite the rise of narcissistic character disorders as related to the demise of public life. This occurs as spheres of public activity shrink and cities become composed of thoroughfares rather than open meeting places. The self is confronted with tasks it can’t cope with. Secular, capitalistic society creates consumers with their associated needs and desires; personality replaces character, preparing the ground for dominance of the intimate realm. Lasch relates this phenomenon to the apocalyptic nature of modern social life, vis-a-vis the decline of the family and traditional leaders and the parallel evaporation of history and the historical continuity of generations Capitalism with its incessant mode of advertising furthers narcissism. The decline of traditional authority gives rise to modern forms of expertise ministering to various needs, which often just cater to and cultivate such narcissistic needs (Giddens citing Lasch, 1991, 169-73).
Giddens (1991) on the other hand, feels that the public realm has actually expanded in new ways not available before modernity, as well as an increased participation in political and economic spheres, as well as labour/union rights and well-being, and the pervasive presence of self-help organizations. Though these are accompanied by growth in bureaucratic systems, Giddens draws the point that these do not go unresisted. He feels that the accounts of Lasch and others also don’t allow enough for human agency or for the many areas of collective action possible in current social life. He cites recombinant families as an example of social networking and reconstituting to engage with for instance, the breakdown of traditional families. He elaborates on narcissism as one among several other pathologies of the body which modern social life tends to promote. Giddens discusses the uses of therapy within this context of the reconstitution of self and social life within modernity. He states that therapy has to be seen as more complicated than just dependence on experts or narcissistic or for the privileged only, and that it is not just a matter of adjusting individuals to a flawed social environment or secular substitute for traditional religion. Rather, it is a further phenomenon of modernity’s reflexivity, as formed around the rhetoric of illnesses and cures, but it needs to be seen also as a methodology of life-planning, an attempt at harmonizing present concerns and life projects with psychological inheritance, and not just an adjustment device. It fully expresses the dislocations and uncertainties of modernity. It can promote dependency and passivity, but it can also permit engagement and reappropriation. The problem is that therapies nonetheless take place against the backdrop of sequestration of experience and internally referential systems, so that many of them are oriented towards control, interpreting the reflexive project of the self in terms of self-determination alone. Thus they can confirm the separation of the lifespan from extrinsic moral considerations. Tribulations of the self occur in the sense that, though the notion of apocalypse has become banal, no amount of bracketing this out can overcome the background anxieties we live with in our times.

Ontological Security

Processes of change are intrinsically connected to globalizing influences and being caught up in the waves of this, and in the crisis-prone nature of our times. Sequestration of experience can contain many of these anxieties that threaten ontological security but at a cost. Giddens (1991) notes the close connection between sequestration of experience, trust and the search for intimacy. Trust in abstract systems can bracket out much anxiety but does not provide the moral satisfactions that trust in persons can offer. In the reflexive project of the self, the narrative of self-identity is inherently fragile. Pure relationships create enormous burdens for the integrity of the self; they are vulnerable as a source of security at fateful moments. We live in the world differently than in previous eras. Though we are still situated locally in
time and place, globalization and mediated experience fundamentally change what ‘the world’ actually is, both phenomenologically and in terms of social reality. In general, the phenomenal world no longer corresponds to the habitual settings we move through. Each person imposes his own order or selectivity on the mediated experience we take in; all phenomenal worlds are an active accomplishment. It involves distinctive tensions and difficulties for the self, dilemmas that have to be resolved in order to preserve a coherent narrative of self-identity. Some of the tension lines are for instance, unification vs. fragmentation, powerlessness vs. appropriation, authority vs. uncertainty, personalized vs. commodified experience. Globalization is an ongoing constituent of these effects on the self, with its dialectic of the local and global.

Giddens (1991) identifies the deskilling that is intrinsic to the disembedding mechanisms of modernity, where everyday knowledge is appropriated by experts, even if it is often reappropriated by lay actors. We are surrounded by a multitude of abstract systems and can only process superficial knowledge of their technicalities. To a large degree, we place our trust in them. Giddens follows Winnicott in attributing our ontological security, our trust in the existential anchoring of reality, to confidence in the reliability of persons.

Basic trust is connected in an essential way to the interpersonal organization of time and space, as our caregivers lead us to apprehend ‘potential space’ through experiences of presence and absence. Core connections are established between routine, the reproduction of coordinating conventions, and feelings of ontological security in the later activities of the individual (38-39).

Such trust if achieved, states Giddens, is what allows us to bracket off existential anxieties and prevents us from being overwhelmed by the risks that are part of the business of living. Creativity proceeds from such basic trust, and where individuals cannot live creatively, melancholic or schizophrenic tendencies, the loss of a sense of solidarity or reality, as well as chronic anxiety can result. In pre-modern contexts, tradition would play a key role in articulating action and ontological frameworks. A key type of existential question we face is that of self-identity, which we can only understand as the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his or her biography (52-54). This presumes interpretation of continuity across time and space. A person with a stable sense of self-identity has a reasonable sense of continuity, and the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. This presupposes elements of ontological security.
For Berry (2002), our modern notion of the identity crisis arises from our disconnection of body and soul and the other fragmentations in our contemporary experience:

One’s ‘identity’ is apparently the immaterial part of one’s being – also known as psyche, soul, spirit, self, mind, etc. The dividing of this principle from the body and from any particular worldly locality would seem reason enough for such a crisis. Treatment, it might be thought, would logically consist in the restoration of these connections: the lost identity would find itself by recognizing physical landmarks, by connecting itself responsibly to practical circumstances; it would learn to stay put in the body to which it belongs and in the place to which preference or history or accident has brought it; it would, in short, find itself in finding its work. But ‘finding yourself,’ the pseudo-ritual by which the identity crisis is supposed to be resolved, makes no use of such immediate references. Leaving aside the obvious and ancient realities of doubt and self-doubt, as well as the authentic madness that is often the result of cultural disintegration, it seems likely that the identity crisis is a conventional illusion, one of the genres of self-indulgence. It can be an excuse for irresponsibility or a fashionable mode of self-dramatization. It is the easiest form of self-flattery – a way to construe procrastination as a virtue – based on the romantic assumption that ‘who I really am’ is better in some fundamental way than the available evidence would suggest. (106)

Berry (2002) sees the ‘autonomy’ that is the supposed fashionable cure for this crisis, as an illusory condition. The sexual division of labour and nurture is a further case of our cultural fragmentations. To divide body and soul, or body and mind, is to inaugurate an expanding series of divisions—not, however, an infinitely expanding series, because it is apparently the nature of division sooner or later to destroy what is divided; the principle of durability is unity (107-108).

Berry’s more cynical perspective is both predicated on some of Gidden’s basic tenets on the shift in the experience of self, and also serves to illuminate how our (also historically constructed) trends of categorization, diagnosis and ‘cure’ that accompany and mediate such a social shift, can miss the mark and become reflective pathologies in themselves in how they interpret the altered condition of the individual. As elaborated in Raymond Williams’ (1961) discussion above, and also in Buber’s (1992, 2002) and Winnicott’s (2002) thinking, the individual exists in ontological relation to the other and enacts unique individuality only through social experience. So it would make sense to consider that through disciplines such as psychology with its special emphasis on the abstracted individual, descriptions such as
‘identity-crisis’ would socially proliferate, which are skewed at their root in turning on the separated notion of the individual. Yet, however we perceive and mediate (or not) our sundered state of individuality, the modern ‘self’ is a fact of experience and must be negotiated, if only to recover recognition of the ontological matrix in which it is embedded. Mary Catherine Bateson (1985) conveys her own revelation of this in a description of her wedding:

Margaret (Bateson’s mother Margaret Mead) made it clear that our wedding was not a private occasion only, for such passages act as symbols in other people’s lives. She added to the invitation list the names of many people I had never met or heard of, saying that this was her opportunity to express a continuing relationship to colleagues and childhood friends who had heard about me over the years....The first wedding I ever went to was the wedding of Moana Holt, whom as a baby my mother had held in her arms as they sheltered in a concrete water tank from a hurricane in Samoa, and Moana gave me the veil of the candy bride on her wedding cake, so a part of that wedding was mine. Then, when I married, remembering that moment, I gathered all the small children together and had a picture taken with and for them, in case this was their first wedding. There was a couple among our friends who revived a dying relationship around our wedding and another who broke up, and one set of guests took a big bag of food to a Kennedy campaign gathering that night in the Bronx. The ceremony belonged to many people...

We talk in this country often about property rights, but we talk more rarely about the shares people have in each other’s lives, and about people’s rights to participation and pleasure, especially at the moments of passage: the right to throw a handful of earth on a coffin, the right to stand up to catch a tossed bouquet and dream of one’s own future wedding, to kiss a bride or groom and to hold a newborn. Couples today devise new rituals or set up housekeeping together in ways most meaningful to themselves without wondering whether meaning is something they owe to a larger community. (280)

Creative modalities so often can illuminate these deeper realities that underlie our notions of the segregated individual as reflected in the social rituals as described above; such descriptions stand out in an otherwise rationalistic and individualistic culture. The practice of improvisation, known mainly in the fields of movement, theatre and music, is a powerful means for iterating the existential nature of the self and its ontological links to the other, thus providing another mode of knowledge and source for consciousness and change.
**Improvising Community**

Anthropologically and anatomically, movement precedes language (Frost & Yarrow, 2007). In the realm of theatre and more recently in education and therapeutic realms, the mode of physical improvisation is used for purposes that range from a rehearsal or training device, a physical/psychological unblocking, enabling a larger vocabulary and range of communicative capacity, to a developmental process for the actor exploring the existential and authentic self in order to ‘disarm’ the performer of the familiar ego with its habitual movement patterns and dramatic clichés. This can extend, for example with Grotowski (Schechner & Wolford, 1997) into para-theatrical contexts, where the intersubjectivity of performer and audience are foregrounded over the presentation of a narrative. Emerging from the work of precursors such as Stanislavsky, Meyerhold and Chekhov, improvisation might be defined as a ‘state of perpetual discovery’ which leads to an internalized vocabulary of gesture, rhythm, and sequence, occurring within various emergent or assigned patterns and structures. It is not to be confused with random or self-indulgent physical expression, but is a specifically-conceived practise used variously by movement and theatre practitioners across the decades of the 20th century. Basic principles such as trust and respect of one’s fellow actors are fundamental to the work, which proceeds from a multitude of specific approaches or specific exercises as used by different practitioners, to catalyze individual and group improvisation.

For example, Jacques Lecoq’s school worked to investigate the corporeal basis of creativity. His work is based on recognition of the body’s potential for engendering, registering and remembering experience at subtle and profound levels. For Lecoq, the body moves and speaks as it moves. Its speaking is an act of memory and an act of creation, an invention of corporeal, imaginative and theatrical languages (Frost & Yarrow, 2007, 86-87). Improvisaton work is central in Lecoq’s work, where

...performance always occurs as immediate experience within and across bodies and their emotional and physical sensibilities, be they of actors or spectators, prior to categorization or assimilation into discursive categories. I know only and directly because I know

‘before’ what is conventionally defined as knowledge. (Frost citing Lecoq, 2007, 86)

Lecoq is saying that real knowing is always a surprise, an ‘amazed recognition’: for producers and receivers (Frost & Yarrow, 2007, 86-87).

The enlarged range of communicative skills acquired through improvisation, is an extension of being, knowing and interacting (187). We can begin to see that improvisation, with its theatrical and para-theatrical implications for freeing the self, literally embodies both the ontological linkages between
describing, knowing, and communicating that Raymond Williams (1961) articulates in his account of creativity above, and the intersubjectivity among participants that Buber (1992, 2002) formulates in his account of community. In short, it is a process for producing and exchanging meaning that reverberates throughout the personal, cultural and political realms of life. In therapy, using various complementary techniques towards integration, improvisation can release and transform what is blocked off or taboo. Integration here can mean not necessarily the notion of a single or stable self, but the capacity to assume many modes or roles, to play with one’s life, transforming it from within.

As Winnicott (2002) crucially observed, psychology is the extension of physiology. The same physical-psychological blockages and resistances we encounter, whether in theatre or therapy, reveal their external social and political manifestations all around us. Frost and Yarrow (2007) bring home the powerful implications of improvisation when they define its antonym as censorship. Our self, the self, at its fullest and free-est, is ultimately our creative capacity, the whole of who we are. Whether that whole self is refused within the family (where the conditions of trust and interpersonal confirming articulated by Bateson, Winnicott and Buber may not have been experienced), artistically within the context of cultural expression, or in political protest, the denial is the same. Improvisation has always been the ‘censor’s nightmare’, countering as it does the hegemony of text. *In its process, as well as often in its product, it is a politics, an operational mode of generating structural and attitudinal change* (194).

The corollary is that cultural attitudes and social policies, as well as our attempts to change them, too often disregard or separate off the personal realm and the primary matter of cultural values as transmitted through our environmental socialization. Mate (2010) argues for the damaging results of mistreatment, abuse and stress, and lays a share of responsibility with his own medical profession who put an emphasis on genetics over environment, in for instance, treatment of addiction or the rise of autism and children with ADD:

... it never used to be that children grew up in a stressed nuclear family. That wasn’t the normal basis for child development. The normal basis for child development has always been the clan, the tribe, the community, the neighborhood, the extended family.

Essentially, post-industrial capitalism has completely destroyed those conditions. People no longer live in communities which are still connected to one another. People don’t work where they live. They don’t shop where they live. The kids don’t go to school, necessarily, where they live. The parents are away most of the day. For the first time in history, children are not spending most of their time around the nurturing adults in their lives. And
they’re spending their lives away from the nurturing adults, which is what they need for healthy brain development. (Mate, 2010, interview)

Mate unflinchingly asserts that this gets everybody off the hook:

Well, if people’s behaviors and dysfunctions are regulated, controlled and determined by genes, we don’t have to look at child welfare policies, we don’t have to look at the kind of support that we give to pregnant women, we don’t have to look at the kind of non-support that we give to families, so that, you know, most children in North America now have to be away from their parents from an early age on because of economic considerations. And especially in the States, because of the welfare laws, women are forced to go find low-paying jobs far away from home, often single women, and not see their kids for most of the day. Under those conditions, kids’ brains don’t develop the way they need to. And so, if it’s all caused by genetics, we don’t have to look at those social policies; we don’t have to look at our politics that disadvantage certain minority groups, so cause them more stress, cause them more pain, in other words, more predisposition for addictions; we don’t have to look at economic inequalities. If it’s all genes, it’s all — we’re all innocent, and society doesn’t have to take a hard look at its own attitudes and policies. (2010, interview)

Mate’s articulations join on seamlessly and add further weight to Winnicott’s work of decades ago, together shedding light on the inverse and vicious circles of capitalist ideology, its extensions into family life, and the paradox that even our aims for social change can be misguided when we have not fulfilled the foundational work of personal development or healing. Mate cites this effect in his own life:

... I was a Jewish infant who spent his first year of life in the ghetto of Budapest under Nazi occupation. My grandparents were killed in Auschwitz and my father was away in forced labour and that had a real impact on my development. Mostly what I realized is that I spent my whole life trying to deal with my mother’s pain and trying to somehow correct it. In fact, you can trace a lot of my political activities to want to make the world okay, based on that early experience. A lot of people that get into left-wing politics do use their politics as a way of dealing with emotional stuff that they haven’t quite looked at internally, which doesn’t invalidate their politics, it just means that their work sometimes is a bit unnecessarily heavy because the pain they’re dealing with is internal rather than the external stuff they are looking at. So people need to take a good, close look at themselves
which will not only help heal their own pain but also make their political work more effective. (Mate, 2010, interview)

Mate’s own approaches to healing imply the significant role of awareness: *Personally, the reading I’ve done on psychology, emotions, spirituality, the therapy that I’ve had, groups I have participated in, the work that I do with other people, just observing the world, and observing myself in the world* (2010, interview).

Frost and Yarrow (2007) cite that practitioners using theatre processes in social contexts such as prisons, to address community and political issues, increasingly find that a means is needed for negotiating the personal, often traumatic circumstances of the participants. But Mate notes that the circuits of the brain can change later. This has implications for how we might develop and change through awareness and learning, and through modalities such as movement, improvisation and therapeutic work. As Winnicott (2002) recognized, psychology is an extension of physiology. When we do movement and improvisation work, when we open our throats, chest, hips, voice, when we hold or release a *position*, we are doing just that – opening ideationally, attitudinally. Or put differently, knowing, seeing, recognition flow through us to the extent that we give corporeal passage or form to them; we are meeting and moving through our own resistances. As we do, we often encounter literally our places of holding in the form of stiffness, grief, distress sensed in our tissues beyond anything articulable.

The practice of improvisation relates across many forms of creative expression and is also intrinsic in all manifestations of everyday life: how we move through the day, solve problems, make decisions, work, play and rest, how we participate and respond in our physical and social environment. Thus, improvisation as a practice of how we embody and as an intrinsic element or phase of creativity has clear relevance to our very hopes for genuine community. An interdisciplinary research project, Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice (ICASP) based at University of Guelph, takes as its core hypothesis that musical improvisation is a crucial model for political, cultural, and ethical dialogue and action (http://www.improvcommunity.ca/). Heble, project director, argues that

the innovative working models of improvisation developed by creative practitioners have helped to promote a dynamic exchange of cultural forms and to encourage new, socially responsive forms of community building across national, cultural, and artistic boundaries. Improvisation, in short, has much to tell us about the ways in which communities based on
such forms are politically and materially pertinent to envisioning and sounding alternative ways of knowing and being in the world. (Heble, n.d., About ICASP)

Buber (1992) implies such broader relevance for improvisation exactly in noting how genuine community demands by its emergent nature ‘a constant weighing...’ What more is Buber describing here than the capacity for open and neutral readiness to respond to the conditions at hand?: As with all traffic of the idea with reality, how much economic and political autonomy will be accorded, and how much centralization or decentralization, must be a constant weighing... (100). This becomes clearer if we further examine the meanings of improvisation and the states it can achieve. Frost and Yarrow (2007) make good use of the term La disponibilite, for which we find no English word, but which stands for a state of centredness and ‘armed neutrality,’ an open-ness, from which all movements and responses are equally possible. The truth is not covered up, as all is embodied in this existential condition. Such creativity is always both giving and receiving, both between improvisers and with the audience, or else creation cannot occur:

It is a condition of relaxed awareness where one does not need to impose order on the external world or on the imagination: order is found in the world and in the imaginative response to others. One does not need to deny the ordering intelligence, the analytical self. Rather, that self takes its proper place. One does not need to subjugate the mind; the mind knows when not to dominate, and the body knows when to be still as well as when to move. (196)

Though ‘prior’ to language, form and ideas in the physical sense, Frost and Yarrow (2007) stress that improvisation has nothing to do with lapsing into cultural nostalgia, primitive behaviour or to be confused with the decentred self of postmodernism, but is a precise psychophysiological condition, which is, as with all genuine experiential research, achievable and repeatable by anyone here and now (200). Rather, improvisation is about opening up access to a substratum of deeper knowing, or staying with the not knowing of who or what we are, a level where our lives merge with others, where we acquire the ability to use and direct the emergence of form. We experience a vital shift in the sense of self and its function...we move towards an awareness that self is a capacity for generating a plurality of meaning... Ultimately we can consider with Frost and Yarrow that, Perhaps historically, and essentially, improvisation is the basis of all theatre, and of the creation of a role or a life (203-204).

Improvisation, I suggest, involves us directly in the ethics of care and in the possibilities for community, for it pre-empts the predetermined position or response, is predicated on truthfulness, and confronts us
moment to moment with the contingent nature of self and community. With repercussions for creative forms, everyday life, pedagogy, therapeutic and healing modalities and social policy, and as our need for peaceful, counterhegemonic forms of practice and discourse is acute, such a cultural tool has perhaps come into its time. Heble (n.d., About ICASP) writes: *...in an era when diverse peoples and communities of interest struggle to forge historically new forms of affiliation across cultural divides, the participatory and civic virtues of engagement, dialogue, respect, and community-building inculcated through improvisatory practices take on a particular urgency.*

**THE ART OF CARE**

These knowledges and practices, alongside the visions of Buber or Bookchin, provide rich tools for thinking towards a humane culture. Winnicott’s narratives of care for the infant being contribute a taproot for the ethic of care. And how deeply we need voices like Mate’s who cut across hegemonic distortions to name the social effects when such care does not occur or follow through. These accounts can move us to consider that our real work in responding to social injustices and our ecological crisis might lie in personal and cultural healing, thus both inwardly and outwardly restoring the techniques of care – of people, places and things –, which we appear to have lost, to consider the idea that perhaps our primary relation to things is not so much about getting them or losing them, but about caring for them. The ideologies of capitalism and consumerism seem antithetical to such an ethic. Their relentless hegemony extends easily into our private lives so that we willingly, resignedly, or simply must, give our primary energy to work careers that feed our consumer capacity more than actual needs or sense of reward, are able to provide limited time and care to our children, accept pervasive technology and media influences which shape our children’s psyches, as ‘givens,’ and succumb to treating things and people as infinitely expendable and replaceable. Surely the work of care, inseparable from the intent and techniques of creativity, is intrinsic in any genuine communities we might imagine.

I suggest that that one of the many effects of hegemonic culture is to exhaust us for the work of care (of all kinds) and for genuine action, even when we see what is required. Challenging, for instance, the co-option of medical care by institutional services, Gorz registers the *lack of time* available within our model of work as largely responsible for generating the need for these services, whether public or private, whose norms and procedures are laid down by the state:

> A reduction in working hours without loss of income could allow the repatriation to grassroots communities, through voluntary cooperation and mutual aid on the level of the
neighbourhood or block, of a growing number of services which will better satisfy our
needs, and be better adapted to them. (Gorz, n.d.)

Unable to meet such communal needs, such unacknowledged loss is displaced through our
sentimentalized veneer of a seeming-to-care, of response to symptoms, rather than tracing the roots of
social ills. Distorted from being a primary act of human responsibility, acts of care have become laden
with fetishistic and moralistic overtones. We valorize foodbanks and anti-poverty discourse rather than
challenge a system that structurally creates poverty and fails to give all citizens work and a living wage.
We glorify family values and community even within work places and consumption practices that
inherently undermine the prospects for these. We settle for the seeming connection of social media. We
succumb to the moral appeal of campaigns for medical research branded with support by corporations
whose very products, such as processed food, engender disease and align with the medicalization of the
health ‘industry.’ Recently, a pamphlet arrived at my door advertising ‘smart home monitoring’ where
parents from wherever can monitor their homes from afar. This campaign cleverly markets itself as “Now
you can be home, even when you’re not.” This speaks perfectly to the culture of self-congratulatory
seeming (to use Buber’s term as the shadow presence) that we have cultivated. This is care, family,
community, as doublespeak.

As Raymond Williams said decades ago, here paraphrased by Terry Eagleton (1989):

> The economic crisis is, among other, more familiar things, a crisis of this world view. For
given the probable course of world demand for manufactured goods and the technical
transformation of production processes, unemployment can be ended only by a major
development of the labour-intensive activities of ‘nurture and care’ – kinds of work that
attract low (or no) income because they do not, and cannot, reward capitalist investment.

> ‘Welfare capitalism’ has always been a contradiction in terms, Williams argues. Only if
‘welfare’ is generalized as the shaping principle of all economic activity can technical
innovation become ‘labour-saving’ in a positive sense. (71)

Such abstracted notions of care and falsified terms ramify into further distortion and human damage when
filtered through the channels of our commodified and mediated culture at all levels. Nutt (2011) cites from
the realm of international AID, the mass marketing (‘poverty porn’) of charities benefiting from
sponsorship programs, which she calls vestiges of neo-colonialism, cloaked in altruism (136). Alongside
genuinely respectful humanitarian programs, Nutt comments, there are the many cases where, in our
efforts to ‘do good,’ *the injustices endured by the impoverished and the war-ravaged become the backdrop to our personal quest for personal or emotional fulfilment, and not the other way around* (Nutt, 2011, 137). We could also describe these cultural expressions as extensions at the utmost scale of Buber’s notion of ‘imposing’ and Winnicott’s ‘being-done-to’. At the institutional level, our operative notions of the nation-state and national citizenship seem the antithesis of communal notions of care. Robinson (1999) writes in the context of international relations that the force of nationalism still belies the rhetoric of the international community or ‘world order’ that accompanies globalization:

> The principle of state sovereignty has restricted our political identity and created an international system based on exclusion; it has also, however, been understood as a source of moral value, standing in an uneasy, yet cleverly reconciled, relationship to cosmopolitan notions of the universal community of mankind (95).

Such forces continue to impact our moral and psychological dispositions as individuals. Echoing the warnings of Appadurai above on how the state pre-empts context-generative neighbourhoods and seeks to reproduce itself, she cites Hegel:

> ...it is through their participation in the state, as citizens, that people come to know themselves to be constituted parts of a whole rather than alienated individuals. To become a whole, free, and fully ethical self a person has to be citizen of a good state (Robinson, 1999, quoting Frost quoting Hegel, 92).

Nothing could more fully oppose the localized, organically emerging and responsive communal citizenship and politics articulated by Buber (1992, 2002), Bookchin (1992, 1995, 2007), or Williams (1961, 1989). As intrinsic to Winnicott’s (2002) citing of the family as the ‘factory of democracy,’ it is rather in the child’s innate sense of right and wrong and capacity for concern that we see the true basis of the techniques of care that are needed to grow outwards, to extend and be reflected back through all our cultural realms (203). In a humane, sustainable culture, care would be invisible, not a special appearance, but an innate function of human activity. Indeed, Berry (2002) emphasizes, as constituent of our human economy, the practice of the human virtues, but stresses the paradox that these are invisible, not abstracted and preached as they have become in our culture, not the coldhearted charity of the “general good,” but dissolved in the particularities and practices that embody them – *good work, good farming, good parenthood, good homemaking, and so on*. As he puts it, *Temperance has no appearance or action of its
own, nor does justice, prudence, fortitude, faith, hope, or charity (Berry, 2002, 234). Care cannot be an abstraction or an appearance.

If we thus recover our meanings of care away from sentimentalized corporate and media constructions, and embrace the insights of child development, the applications of creative and healing modalities such as improvisation, and the value of therapeutic practices where required – all encompassing a revision of our medical system – we can shift culture in a beneficient direction. We can reiterate here the importance of self-reflexive awareness, undertaken not to indulge the cult of the individual as therapeutic modes can easily do, but, using critically-assessed approaches, as counterbalance to deficits of care in our culture. This ensures the grounded consciousness of our aims and motivations – awareness which, as Mate (2010) rightly insists, is essential as the foundation of our social efforts. Care is demanded of us by things, people and places, if we are listening. The notion of therapeia – ‘close attendance’ –, discussed in the section, Notes on Place, likewise suggests the presence of care as the very fibre joining that which is connected. Further, care is slow; it takes time. It is a value that capitalism innately precludes. As Benjamin (1936[1968]) cites from Valery: Modern man (sic) no longer works at what cannot be abbreviated (93). We can easily be left with only the will and energy to repeat the cycles of work and consumption. It takes tremendous effort to meet these deeper demands, yet we know the fruitful outcomes they yield. Finally, creation and care are a single impulse.

Part Two has examined our notions and processes of culture, community, creativity and the individual to conceive the possibility of revitalized and emergent community life. We have considered how the natural human rite of care, along with creative and healing modalities, would be intrinsic practices for such communities. I believe efforts in this direction are among the sustained kinds of intellectual and educational work that Raymond Williams (1989) believes are needed to defeat the system of meanings and values which a capitalist society has generated (75). This task further demands confronting the models of work and economy that continue to circulate these meanings; that is, what we do every day. This is undertaken in Part Three.
Finally I registered the other morning: the issue is that our intrapersonal work takes time. Delving into ourselves, making that kind of internal relationship, is an opus, a concerted intent and effort. Suddenly it hit me, yes, that is the thing that makes it seem so other, against the grain, esoteric and specialized in our culture. It is much easier, automatic almost, to be constantly dealing with others externally, and bumping up against our foibles that way, projecting our psychic contents onto others. But perhaps it’s not only that it takes time but, that it takes the most will and effort and has, in a way, the most implications that we may or may not be able to swallow and live from. For once we go there, we cannot un-know what we know or have found within. Yet such awareness is the foundational step for healing the world outside ourselves. It is our epistemology, ecology, culture, that need healing; so the work of healing remains an essential mode of knowledge.

Walking back from the park, it comes to me now, that a main effort in my life so far has been to affect the undoing of those experiences of being-done-to, in order to be able to be and be along-side...

Home/making is the heart of my life in creating that un-impinging environment where I can rest from experience.

A history of community

I have been obsessed with community all my life. In my early 20s in Vancouver, I subscribed to Communities magazine where I would read about the intentional communities in the U.S. Then in England I got the Diggers and Dreamers book in the 90s and went with my daughter when she was small to these intentional communities. I thought I wanted to live in one of them. I soon saw how ‘intentional communities’ were often simply full of good intentions and were not the way I had assumed they might be at all. And I realized when I thought it through, that I would have missed, for instance, the older people on our street and the kids down the street, and Papu, the little boy next door, and his family. Then later, all the years Hannah was in a Waldorf School, I became disillusioned by the supposed community it was supposed to be too (though that was more about who I was at the time). I ended up feeling that community is this: community is what is on your doorstep. All the rest was the way that I came to know what community was not. I have found the same again these last 10 years in our housing co-operative, gift as it is. It is steeped in the rhetoric of community, yet it is absolutely a non-intentional community, externally administered and defined, and is largely characterized by indifference and non-participation, and living a quiet life in order to keep
one’s ‘housing’. In 2004 I took part in a year-long process of the Guelph Community Play, supposed to convey the story of Guelph and mobilize ‘the community.’ It was steeped in the rhetoric of community. There were about 200 of us. It was a good thing to do but not at all an experience of community for me, except in fleeting and circumscribed, seeming ways. Nor did the ‘community’ extend after the play as they assumed it would. Communities are continually broken and reconfigured. In Guelph, many groups use the community word, but I do not always believe what they say. I have been obsessed with community all my life and continually attracting experiences of community of one form or another. I believe this has been so that I can know everything about what community is not, so that I may begin to know in my bones what it is and might be. The other side of this story is that many of these really were and are experiences of community, but in ways we could not as yet know or tell ourselves about, but in time might recognize. It is in part a question of belief, a matter of definition and experiences not being in sync. In a documentary, Billy Connolly visits a woman of 80 who lives by herself in Alaska, miles from anyone, chops wood, grows food, and looks after herself and is happy as anything. Can we say she is not part of a community? It seem to me she is community. When David Earle’s company dances the Fauré Requiem at Easter, then I know community in the bones; it is embodied in motion there before us.

All this is a way of saying I am not certain yet what community is, but I have had the privilege of many ‘as if’ experiences.

The other side of the story

The lovely thing about being in the co-op is that there are people around you all the time; you are never in a building alone. Even when these are people we bear no external connection to beyond physical proximity, it is no matter. That is, all we need is just to be around people, so simple. Like animals. Community, as we all know, is essential, whether it’s with partner, sister, friend, daughter, one or thirty, no matter; it is the bond, the thing between us that matters. That thing between is the same for all of us. The form doesn’t matter, we just must have it. At the end of the workday, I feel that need for just an errand or two to do exchange with other humans, however mundane or minor, the more mundane the better; the content does not matter. That is how deep and fundamental our social need is. My friend used to say when our children were all in the Steiner school and we were single parents, “I just need to have a cup of tea with someone everyday, to stay sane.”
Company

Walking in the park, the grass is my company, the children with their parents are my company. The red dry leaves are my company. The day is my company. The dog walkers are my company. The young on the grass are my company. The gentle autumn air is my company.

Who do we talk to when we talk to ourselves? And how honest can we be? I haven’t answered myself yet, but certainly I have come to understand first hand that the self is an idea, an ongoing fiction in time. And so I laugh as I talk to myself. A commentator on TVO from a Middle Eastern country said: Canada seems a lonely country; it is focused on the individual more than the community, compared to my Arab country.

Holding

As I re-read Winnicott, I know only too well, that this thesis is a reiteration of that whole journey that I am still making. This long work is a journey of integration and an act of faith that I can connect this self to the visible world. Everything feels to be at stake in it.

My life has been a living ‘as if...’ That is, I live as if all the pieces are joined up and they are, but I must hold them constantly in place.

Seeing too much

What happens when you see too much? You either run and hide or stay out of as many affairs as you can. Or you fake it everywhere you need to. Can you tell the truth about what you see? Hardly ever. When you see too much, both outside and inside, you are silenced. All my life I have yearned for root, for living necessity, from my intuition of what our culture lacks, the core of survival knowledge and embodied celebratory culture without which there is only surface. I have felt, as next to my own skin, the void of our culture.

I first approached this thesis with an obsession of several years about, among other things, Alexander’s Pattern Language and also Bachelard and am now living that and grasping my deep concern with place, whatever these all mean, and they mean and will mean much. My other obsession was stories. I thought that if I could find some pattern...that maybe I was stuck in a story myself and that’s why I could not grasp stories. I believe I am always trying to work back to those places where everything broke up, so I can work it out again. If only I had a story for it. I think I am catching up now.
Alone

We are not supposed to like alone, are we? I wonder now if I was made for it, or whether it is simply the only way I know (or the way I have so far needed) to have peace and be integrated. The act of relationship is so enormous, so monumental, so laborious, yet we have trivialized it to a nearly commodified exchange of sentiment, convenience and unexamined expectation. Giddens writes that our contemporary period is the first where relationships attempt to reflect a kind of democracy and a place where intimacy alone is the purpose of the relationship. I have felt for many years that our generation is a historical bridge from one kind of relationship, the kind that our parents were socialized to enter, and the next – those our now adult children will have the capacity to enter. Our generation had to bear the errors and untruths of previous generations’ models (even where many of them fought their way through ultimately to truth, love and deep companionship and contentment) and suffer that legacy in terms of broken relationships. In our assumptions of freedom and of something better and truer, we could not live our parents’ models, yet made our own mistakes through lacking the tools as yet to work wisely through to a liveable model of love and commitment, to stay the course. We threw out the baby with the bathwater, or could not attain identity and integration within the confines of a relationship, without assenting to the other or destroying them to achieve it.

Yet rather than find peace in our place in that larger pattern of change, we fight our way out of aloneness, refusing to work past seeing it as an evil (because in our culture it almost is). Many use their computers nowadays to ensure they will not have to be alone. Relationships become things we get so we will not have to be alone. The point here is that there are such riches in being, in the knowledge and presence of others’ being, the knowledge of ourselves and those we love just being-in-place in both time and space, and this and these can be food enough for the soul, a kind of grace. I wrote a poem called Aloneness at the age of 14. I wonder if already I knew it was the only way that I could be, at least for a long time. That I could that way, as Winnicott puts it so exquisitely, seek rest from experience, which I find to be enervating past a certain level if it is not substantive and whole-making (which so much of our experience isn’t). And anyway, I think that a great deal of healing comes and still comes, in resting from experience.
Skype

Skype allows you to bear the distance a little easier. I am ever joyful at the feeling that I can be with my daughter on Skype. I can see and sense her, all but touch her. My friend said, yes, telepresence is real, if you already have a basis of relationship there.

I believe now that lack of interest in others must be the most terrible human disengagement and unease. The truest death. The ultimate vacuum. I think this is what Winnicott would register as the lack of capacity for concern.

Thanksgiving Tableau

I see the first meal ever witnessed from afar, in the window of the apartment building not far from my co-op apartment. It is Saturday evening on Thanksgiving weekend. I scarcely see living beings in the many windows of that building, let alone a lit window and family members of all ages gathered at the table talking and feasting. The tenants come and go. The parking lot sits coldly below my balcony, no grass or garden breaking the stretch of concrete up to the edge of the bulding, but at least it is mostly very quiet. No life visible on the solid concrete balconies, save the odd smoker coming out to puff for a couple of minutes. And now here is a family eating together. The grandparents have come to their son or daughter`s apartment. There is a table, large, all set with food. That table is clearly – a place. The place is accepted, for this time, as home. Hours later in their window, the light is still on, the family members are still at the table, still moving plates about. It is a long family meal. Apartment buildings need not be so un-beautiful, so transient. Families do not need large, detached homes to share meals in. Even Buber talked about the breath of friendliness in the apartment building...there shouldn’t be anything strange about that.

6 months later, March 31, 2012. Going to bed I look out the window and see the superintendent sweeping in the clearly empty kitchen of this apartment. The woman must have just moved out. The emptiness is startling. Come. And gone.
Depression, September 2011

As I write, we are on the threshold of what has so far been called a recession, but some are now saying could become another Depression. It is a far more fitting word, though few of us alive lived through such an experience. It is about extreme debt which we could describe another way as loss of reality. About nothing, relating to nothing, about money gained or lost, that does not even exist. That does not effectively alter life for those who are either rich or starving. An artificial edifice that functions in its own dematerialized vacuum, such a so-called ‘economy’ is better likened to a depression, which strikes us suddenly, or over the duration of a life, when we have lost our souls, the true economy. We are a depressed culture. Walk through our malls and see the vacant faces. Apart from pockets of artistic and cultural activity, our passions have no place or outlet, and discharge instead through unruliness and violence.

My aunt is deeply depressed. She is 69 but has only admitted this lifelong depression to anyone in the last few months, after a few years of being struck down by an arthritic condition and becoming increasingly passive, disinterested, limited in movement, gaining weight progressively, becoming estranged from her own children and their families through mutual blame. Increasingly negative and cynical, she seems to be embodying now all that is dark and lost in the heart of our family. She has experienced terrible things. But more than all this horror, she lost herself many years ago.

To be depressed is to be, like our economy, caved down into ourselves, trying to seek the root, the truth beneath the edifice, whether in the form of sorrows ungrieved, passions unlived, selves unrecognized and unaffirmed. My aunt is telling me that she is depressed and this is the biggest thing she has ever done, to tell someone this. I tell her this is good. She has no language for what her depression means or what she needs to do. She tells me though, that her heart is broken in to many pieces.

Familiars

Our fifth cat, Micah, is a joy. Our tribe of cats, lost and found as they have been through the years, has been a motherlode, marking both joy and loss, the flow of life and death, on and off across the last 18 years. Now with the fifth having come along, I can feel the whole pattern of it. Micah is like the reincarnation of Miro (who disappeared with Pearl from the farm where I had them staying while I waited to be in a place where they could stay) and Sunny (a stray we found here who died in 2006, the year Hannah went back to England). Micah is huge (looks
like a dog, our neighbour said when she saw him lying on the street the other day!]. He eats oodles of my time and energy and preoccupation already, just as I feared. Yet, already I can’t imagine it any other way now, am hopelessly in love with him, and as with all life and love, it totally justifies itself. I know Hannah will love him to bits when she comes at Christmas. She so much wanted me to get another cat. All our cats have come to us. And now, Micah has come too, through Hannah’s friend Matt’s girlfriend Tarah.

Blackberry

This is the saddest story I know. In a cafe last summer in Bristol England, a boy of about 10 sat a table with his mother. She was busy with her blackberry and he just sat there the whole time, a half hour passed. She did not say a word to him or look at him. His head was hung over on his folded arms, his knees hunched up to his chest. His nails were bitten. Two times in the half hour he asked his mother what time it was. Both times she answered, ‘why?’

At the Bookshelf cafe, a baby with the man sitting reading the paper and the baby on his knee is so infinitely peaceful as he bounces her up and down on his knee. Everyone notices and smiles at the baby, she is so lovely. Two women are at the next table as I work and they notice her too. One has been writing in her notebook and asked me about my computer notebook. Later when her friend joins her, she says to her, ‘I’m interested in community, I want to be part of an intentional community.... I’m terrible at cooking for myself...’ She asks her, ‘how are your cats?’ They’re so attached,’ her friend answers, ‘I think it’s because they’re starved for love...’

Nov, 2011- At Red Brick this morning, I pick up a section of the Globe sitting at the empty table next to me. There is a story about a woman in Uganda and how she lost her child in childbirth and is fortunate to be alive herself. When she got to the poorly-equipped clinic at night after being in labour all day, she was told it was shut now and she would have to come back in the morning, even though she had been told she needed surgery. Her baby’s head was already halfway out, and she spent the night in agony. The next day she had surgery and the baby was dead. She had to have her uterus removed, and because of her internal injuries, she needed surgery for fistula, a painful condition that causes chronic incontinence and often leads to its sufferers being ostracized. There are problems of corruption in the supposedly free health care system in Uganda, and if this young woman was a victim of criminal negligence, this is
far from unusual, the article says. When asked about her ordeal, the woman apparently smiled and shrugged fatalistically, saying that they have to accept this and nothing can be done.

My latte tastes bitter.

Staying

Two babies in a long buggy, a little 4 or 5 year-old boy and a mother and father. They talk to the little boy over drinks, ask him what his new school is like. Maybe they have just moved here. They chat, smiling, focusing on him. The babies are happy, gurgling, present in mind and body. They are a unit. All around me I have seen people who have stayed. Stayed where they were born. Stayed at their jobs. Stayed with their partners and families. They have stayed the course. I know nothing about staying, or do I? I have stayed with the truth and demands of who I seem to be, as they must have too.

Soul

At With the Grain cafe after the Remembrance Day ceremony: a young couple with their two kids, the guy says to his young son, ‘oh that was just what I needed...’; his son asks, ‘what?’ He answers, ‘I had peppermint tea, just what my soul needed...’; his son says ‘What’s soul...? What’s your soul??’ His dad answers, ‘...well, it’s...it’s what inside you, it’s a whole lot of things, your heart and your thoughts and what you feel...it’s hard to explain, it’s who you are...’; He’s a little over-earnest now and maybe agitated: ‘er..your mom might have a good answer for that..’ Mom comes over, the baby in a front carrier inside her wool coat...very laid back...she says coolly, ‘...Soul? I don’t really know how to explain that...’ and gets on with the task at hand.

Neighbour

Mena tells me at our co-op cleanup day that she has no job yet. She says I don’t know if it is my colour or my personality, maybe I’ll find a job in Toronto...she has 3 children. I know how it feels, to be empty, to feel you are absolutely nowhere because you do not fit or find a place in the world of work. It was like that for me for a long time. I know that place, where everything inside you has leaked out and you are falling through space forever. I walked with Mena in the sun this afternoon down by the river, it was really nice, she came here 10 years ago too. She wanted to stay in Sri Lanka but her husband wanted to come here. They were going to go
back after 2 years, but then felt they might have cheated their children of the opportunities in Canada. She trained as a doctor graduating at 27 and practised for 18 years back home; her husband is an engineer and he practised for 20 years. She didn't plan to be a doctor, just lived in the present, but qualified and was encouraged because she excelled in maths and sciences but didn't quite make the prerequisites for engineering. She was glad she became a doctor. She has been unable to practice here, so has had to settle so far for qualifying as an RPN, but has had no luck with jobs as yet.

Porch People

The couple across the road, in their late 80s or 90s, are still sunning on their porch everyday in the first week of October.

There is a man on Glasgow Street who is always, always, reading on his porch and it looks like he’s in a kind of heaven there everytime I flash past on my bicycle.

Custodian

David, the custodian at the church I pass every day, is the most in–place person I know. He has worked there for years and every day from spring through fall you will see his motorcycle in the parking lot, and in winter he’s there too, you’ll see him puffing a cigarette against the wall. He’s always there, doing his job, connected to everything that goes on there from services to garage sales to the weekly AA meetings. He’s part of it all. There are so many kinds of home in the world. Passing him everyday is like passing a living landmark, as he just looks out from his place, the big old limestone church, the parking lot and his motorcycle standing there.

Colin’s daughter Jade comes into the cafe and she has had another baby, and she looks perfectly strong and happy and you know she has had her creativity and her strength and her clarity from the day she was born, from – partly – having a father like that. She is one of those people who has no space in them whatsoever for being anything else or any other way, but themselves in all times and places and situations. Her son, about 4 now, sleeps in his stroller and his head keeps lolling over to the side, but she’s too busy with her conversation to really worry about it too much. And then there’s Jackie at the dentist just before this with her four, count’em four kids, one boy just 18 months and 3 girls also close together, and she’s only about 28 and she shines like an angel.
Chris Hedges on TVO comments that the only vehicle we have for minimizing the damage (‘we can’t replace it,’ said Karl Popper) of the dominant forces of our liberal democracy is, as always, social movements; how the loss of our manufacturing base and the reduction of working-class jobs to the service sector, alters our whole economic paradigm to a kind of feudalism with workers in China who don’t even get paid and threaten suicide to get their paycheque. Another commentator on this episode says he prefers the pathologies of our stable society over the pathologies of the unstable ones any day. And wouldn’t most of us say that too, though we don’t usually bother to.

The other side of the story: of hegemony and capitalism. How do we live in the face of all this? Well, because there is the bliss of this exhaustion I feel on a midwinter’s January day when it’s dull and damp out and I am so tired and I feel just the joy and relief of knowing I am now going home, my needs met, that’s all it takes; just this ceaseless moving away from everything and into the secret of myself and of the night. If we can just live between all the regulated lines, we can have a good life; there are all these throughways...and marginal places, all these cracks to live in and they are where joy and possibility are. The very joy of life is that even in this hegemony, there is ceaseless magic, great spaces between the lines. The fact that you can move and dance in all these spaces everyday. The fact that I am perfectly happy with the small joys of knowing I can turn on Murder She Wrote at 7pm of a winter’s night to lull myself and light my beeswax candle and cook my supper and watch my cat sleep and get back to work on my thesis. I feel all this every day but especially on this day after I see Samantha Nutt on TVO and read about her War Child work this morning, and see scenes from the haunting Sunshine movie and feel the connection: this is how I feel today and in general in my life much of the time: that I am wrestling my peace and contentment and simplicity and privilege from deep anxiety...And behind this paper and its discursive and expressive shapes, is the silent, wordless place, which is my primary experience before mind and that I always go back to.

Nov.17 on CBC News: Canadian Fraser Mustard, a child researcher and crusader for early childhood development, has died. He started the emphasis on importance of 0-6 years for children. He said in a clip they showed: *If the child doesn’t get a good environment at the start, they never reach their full capacity.*
All week on CBC’s Connect in February, they have talked about bullying with students in a high school in Ottawa. 20% of the students there had experience of being bullied. All week, there was not a single mention yet of why there is such an epidemic of bullying. All the emphasis was on the ‘solution’...wearing pink shirts that day, doting on the pain of a particular teacher who was bullied. Not one mention was made or question raised about how a generation of violent bullying children came to be. [It must be something in the water?]
PART THREE: SUSTAINING OURSELVES

Art is ratified, in the end, by the fact of creativity in all our living. Everything we see and do, the whole structure of our relationships and institutions, depends, finally, on an effort of learning, description and communication. We create our human world as we have thought of art being created. Art is a major means of precisely this creation. Thus the distinction of art from ordinary living, and the dismissal of art as unpractical or secondary (a 'leisure-time activity'), are alternative formulations of the same error. If all reality must be learned by the effort to describe it successfully, we cannot isolate ‘reality’ and set art in opposition to it, for dignity or indignity. If all activity depends on responses learned by the sharing of descriptions, we cannot set ‘art’ on one side of a line and ‘work’ on the other; we cannot submit to be divided into ‘Aesthetic Man’ and ‘Economic Man.’

(Williams, 1961, 37)

Both industrial and agricultural capitalism have overridden this idea of livelihood, putting generalized production and profit above it. Yet the dominant tendencies in socialism have mainly shared the same emphases, altering only the distribution of profit. The most hopeful social and political movement of our time is the very different and now emergent ‘green socialism’, within which ecology and economics can become, as they should be, a single science and source of values, leading on to a new politics of equitable livelihood.

(Williams, 1989, 237)

Last spring, things felt very different. Some of us were out on the street saying no to the cuts, some of us were mobilizing online, inspired by the spark that came from Tunisia. Some of us were watching TV. None of us could have envisaged a tented city in the shadow of St Paul's Cathedral and certainly not one that lasted as long as this one has. Four months on and we've had the world come to visit. Christians, investment bankers, homeless people, trade unionists, Conservative MPs, Jesse Jackson, students, pensioners, Thom Yorke, rightwing thinktanks, Jarvis Cocker, the great and the good, ordinary Londoners, Vivienne Westwood and many more. All have come to Occupy London to explore what they know to be true – that, no, this system is not right – and that we need to talk about the elephant in the room.

(Occupy, 2012)

Occupy has also created a space in which people of all kinds can coexist, from the homeless to the tenured, from the inner city to the agrarian. Coexisting in public with likeminded strangers and acquaintances is one of the great foundations and experiences of democracy, which is why dictatorships ban gatherings and groups -- and why our First Amendment guarantee of the right of the people peaceably to assemble is being tested more strongly today than in any recent moment in American history. Nearly every Occupy has at its center regular meetings of a General Assembly. These are experiments in direct democracy that have been messy, exasperating and miraculous: arenas in which everyone is invited
to be heard, to have a voice, to be a member, to shape the future. Occupy is first of all a conversation among ourselves.

*To occupy also means to show up, to be present -- a radically unplugged experience for a digital generation. Today, the term is being applied to any place where one plans to be present, geographically or metaphorically: Occupy Wall Street, occupy the food system, occupy your heart.*

*... Before the Occupy movement arrived on the scene, political dialogue and media chatter in this country seemed to be arriving from a warped parallel universe. Tiny government expenditures were denounced, while the vortex sucking our economy dry was rarely addressed; hard-working immigrants were portrayed as deadbeats; people who did nothing were anointed as “job creators”; the trashed economy and massive suffering were overlooked, while politicians jostled over (and pundits pontificated about) the deficit; class war was only called class war when someone other than the ruling class waged it. It’s as though we were trying to navigate Las Vegas with a tattered map of medieval Byzantium -- via, that is, a broken language in which everything and everyone got lost.*

*Then Occupy arrived and, as if swept by some strange pandemic, a contagious virus of truth-telling, everyone was suddenly obliged to call things by their real names and talk about actual problems.*

*(Solnit, 2011)*
Part Two opened the possibility for revitalizing our meanings of culture, community and selfhood, and for recovering modalities of care. If we hope to weave a future of human well-being, what does this ask of us? What are the innate activities that both constitute and sustain human communities as conceived in Part Two? What is the meaning of work? What prevailing cultural norms and practices must we expose and confront, which underlie – unchallenged – the symptoms we so often seek to address? In response to these hegemonic forces, how can our imagined transformations occur by means of our innate and pattern-altering creativity which Raymond Williams delineated?

Part Three considers cultural dimensions of work, consumerism, economy, food and health by re-embedding these issues in the perspective of sustaining ourselves as human beings and communities. This discussion is grounded in the fact that life and its sustenance and well-being surely begin and end with the body and the pleasure of life itself. This means our primary care or ‘work’ as beings must be our relationship to food and thereby to the earth and its cycles, and to the cosmos within which we are embedded. The multi-directional process of care flows inward and through ourselves and outwards to the other through this totality. Many indigenous peoples and many cultures through history assume and embody this round of existence from body through cosmos, reflected materially and performatively across all dimensions of life (Bateson, 1972, 2002[1979]; Berry, 2002; Buber, 1992, 2002; Feld, 1996). I suggest that the fundamental crisis of our culture is its lack of reflection of this lived, embodied participation.

These terms – sustenance, the pleasure of life itself – imply different meanings for ‘happiness’ and value than those that proliferate within capitalist market economy. William Morris captures this perfectly in his lecture of 1887, *The Society of the Future*. If for Morris this vision is sensuous and secular, it is no less encompassing than Wendell Berry’s religious perspective:

> Well now, to begin with, I am bound to suppose that the realization of Socialism will tend to make men (sic) happy. What is it then makes people happy? Free and full life and the consciousness of life. Or, if you will, the pleasurable exercise of our energies, and the enjoyment of the rest which that exercise or expenditure of energy makes necessary to us. I think that is happiness for all, and covers all difference of capacity and temperament from the most energetic to the laziest....Now, whatever interferes with that freedom and fullness of life, under whatever specious guise it may come, is an evil; is something to be got rid of
as speedily as possible. It ought not to be endured by reasonable men (sic), who naturally
wish to be happy. (Morris, 2003 [1890], 267)

What we have come to call work then, is surely traceable to the self-sustaining activity of a human
community as delineated by Buber, Bookchin, and others, where members are either directly involved in
or traceably linked to, the processes of production and consumption by which they live. It is clear that
after our food comes our clothing and the shelter in which we dwell as primary concerns and the first work
of life, and good health as an outcome of all these. It is easy to see aesthetic awareness as fused with all of
these dimensions. It is easy to conceive the organic extension of all work and care outwards from these
concerns, as determined by the needs of the body, being and community, at the physical and spiritual
levels. It is easy too, to imagine technological developments liberating activity beyond universal bondage
to these necessities, yet not outstripping community-scale engagement with these means and crafts of life
as deeply meaningful, creative and aesthetically rewarding activities. These deeply interrelated facts of
being and social life seem so self-evident as to not need mention, yet the prevailing system over the last
two centuries has taken us further and further from this integral set of processes. Rather than this unity and
connection to the means of life, our western culture (and many others impacted by it) has progressively
through modernity, separated out and abstracted all modes of life from this central orientation of
sustenance. We have evolved a condition where notions of work and economy, ideas of health and
nutrition, our lived environment and architecture, agriculture, and birth and death too, have become dis-
embedded or disembodied from this experiential context and handed to ‘specialists’ – organizations,
governments or businesses – who regulate and administer these experiences back to us, reconfigured as
forms and meanings that serve a market and consumer economy, or least are not an inconvenience to it.
Giddens (1991) calls this historical development the sequestration of experience (165).

The production of all means of life is filtered through the dictates of this economy. This ranges from our
food, our housing ‘markets,’ to our distorted idea of beauty and our construction of place as, for instance,
commodified ‘destinations’ (for those who have cars). This domination by a market economy and the
hegemony it exerts, ramifies as wealth and choice to a minority, and a level of affluence for enough
people that it safely becomes an anaesthetized delusion of generalized well-being. Yet this systematized
imbalance leaves only what is utilitarian, ugly or remaindered for those who do not feed into or benefit
from these power structures. Art is represented culturally as the activity and products of a creative few,
rather than ingrained in how we live (Morris, 1890[2003]; Willliams, 1961). Instead of dancing around the
fire in community celebration that the sun has returned from the dark of winter, we move through a flattened mode of time. We pay others to do the singing and dancing, and often say we don’t understand it.

Though civil society, fortunately a growing sector, can work across the private sector to contribute to addressing issues of social justice or support alternative cultural forms with the existing structures, these cannot ultimately supplant the dominant market economy and mode of production. However, as Williams (1989) and others (De Certeau, 1984; Highmore, 2002) emphasize, and as is evidenced by our common experience, hegemony can never exhaust all human energies; alternative and resistant cultures spring up in all times and places. Some of these cultures specifically seek to recover this unity, such as the New Age movement that Bookchin (1995) so criticized, thus providing an ‘answer’ for many individuals. For any who yearn for such a version of connected culture but lacked grounded, lived experience of what real community demands (many of us), it is easy to be seduced by these subcultures, and then gradually realize their distortions and dangers. This is not to deny the beneficial aspects of these movements, but to make it clear that they cannot be positioned as real challenges or solutions to the dominant culture. They can in fact detract from awareness of the larger ills and perpetuate the prevailing system. We grant the dancing round the fire to a few quirky, appropriating (as we call it) subcultures and meanwhile get on with our gaily rationalistic lives. So, though the orientation to an ecological unity of body-earth-cosmos is held or recovered and lived at the individual or small group level for some people in some places, it is not reflected through our mainstream western cultural forms or institutions. There are no spiritual formations that reflect it apart from organized religions, as circumscribed by a specific set of beliefs. If we hope to recover the lived body and its creativity as the core of sustainable, communal culture, we need to trace the ways our prevailing models of work and economy within capitalism displace us from such an integral culture, and how we might speak, narrate, contest and protest these effects to establish and maintain a counterhegemonic discourse (Adkin, 1998; Bauman, 1998, 2005, 2007; Bookchin, 1992 [1995], 1995, 2007; Perkins, 1998).

I attempt to do this in Part Three, critiquing the destructive and hegemonic effects of these models and practices on human well-being and ecology, incorporating the work of Zygt Bauman, William Morris, Murray Bookchin, Wendell Berry, and others. This discussion encompasses consideration of how globalization reconfigures work, and proposes possibilities for humane and sustainable approaches to work and income. Following this, a discussion of the mechanics, patterns and issues of consumerism considers how our construction as consumers may function through our deepest unmet needs for beauty and creativity, and how we might redeem such practices and recover creativity. Underlying our prevailing
model of work is what Berry (2002) terms the *total economy*, which is confronted here. Berry argues for an alternative re-embedded in agrarian and community values. Agricultural and trade practices are configured as crucial elements of sustainable communities and cultures. Through these reflections it is apparent how health is an intrinsic outcome of common and responsible participation in these means of life, and how deeply the aesthetic suffuses culture and human well-being.

**Living to Work**

Smith (about his reluctance to look for a job): *I just don’t think it’s right that the owner makes all the profit and the worker none. I think it should be the worker who does.*

Audrey: *I think so too. Maybe in the future that’s how it will be.*

Smith: *I think it will...but I don’t know where to start.*

*(The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner, 1962 film)*

*Can we sanction this inhumanely rationalized philosophy of work whose principle is the exploitation of physical human power without regard for the humaneness of work? A social movement that does not take issue with these conditions is barred from the path toward community...* (Buber 1930 [2002], 256)

Our model of work within capitalism since the industrial revolution gives cause for many serious concerns relating to human well-being (Adkin, 1998; Gorz; Hartmann, 1998; Morris, 2003 [1890]; Offe, 1996; Paehlke, 1998; Williams, 1989). The social harm perpetrated by this model includes the perpetuation of poverty through profound wage inequalities. Our work still most often takes us away from our homes, families, and places, in terms of time, distance and focus, thereby undermining possibilities for emergence of a locally-sustained economy and community. Our Fordist work model is implicitly gendered, and jeopardizes well-being and childcare in families, both single and two-parent (Adkin, 1998). It mutually feeds and is inseparable from, our capitalist economy of consumption. Many people, nearly two centuries after the early days of the industrial revolution, have to endure jobs that are unsatisfying, demeaning or actually harmful to health in new ways. Much work in fact has created systematic suffering or danger for many people over their entire lives. (Adkin, 1998; Buber, 1992; Bauman, 2005; Berry, 2002; Morris, 2003 [1890]). Our jobs also frequently absorb our essential energy in activities that waste or undermine our real gifts, capacities, and social contributions, eroding culture from within (Berry, 2002). Escalating globalization has had several further impacts on job quality, income, and worker identity for the emerging
service class (Burawoy, 2000; Sassen, 2007). In positioning high income and consumption as signifiers of happiness and ‘success,’ our model of work further manipulates us to live by its dictates.

In short, the hegemonic effect of this model is to mould the majority of us to become not contented, communal human beings, but servants of a market economy. It subjugates us to its instrumental purpose and as it does, easily strips us of the energy and resources to live or imagine living any other way, both in terms of self-identity and in the concrete sense of exhausting us for other life-purposes such as learning, caring and creativity. Too, it exhausts us for what otherwise can be sources of pleasurable reward such as the many tasks of householding (Bachelard, 1958 [1994]; Morris, 1890 [2003]). All of this in turn pre-empts the tradition and reproduction of many essential skills and knowledges (Berry, 2002; Gorz, n.d.; Morris, 1890 [2003]). Most insidiously and circularly, for many who suffer its worst effects, this model of work pre-empts the energy and resources to mobilize protest against it or build counterhegemonic discourse (Adkin, 1998; Perkins, 1998). For the many who have no sustainable work, the welfare system is, at least in Canada, woefully inadequate to sustain life, and is both punitive and stigmatized (http://www.gwpoverty.ca/). Ecologically, our economic and work practices have inflicted serious damage to our planet with little regard for the long-term consequences (Adkin, 1998; Bateson, 1972/1979; Marcuse, 1992; Paekhle, 1998; Williams, 1989). The operative distances between production and consumption enabled by free-reigning economy and technology without any political or ethical interventions, allows us both to harm ‘distant’ others without seeming consequence, and to remain shockingly immune to this fact. When the line of least resistance is systematized destruction enabled by such an entrenched divide between cause and consequence, the challenge to alter such a system seems insurmountable. Religious systems that support our inherited work ethic can reinforce this hegemony of our ideas around work. The media and technologies that fuel and perpetuate our notion of economy compound this hegemonic effect by shaping our consciousness and the use of our energies.

Despite such an insidious circle of harmful, often obscured effects, this active notion of work continues to be valorized over (what we define as) leisure or not-work, except where we are wealthy or retired. This naturalized collective notion continues to set work against pleasure, joy and creativity, and to implicitly devalue many forms of activity in the domestic and social realms. The many exceptions or personal solutions or trends in empirical analyses that formulate for instance, the ‘creative economy,’ where work, meaning, and pleasure might coincide, do not alter this dominant framework (and the life-goal of retirement that goes with it) that will determine the experience of work for most individuals over their lifetimes. The notion of economy upon which this model of work and consumption is constructed –
production and growth without limit for its own sake and without regard to ecological consequences – has in sum then, severed the communal - based roots of life-affirming work, produced conditions of poverty for millions, brought our world to the brink of ecological disaster and positioned us as accomplices by allowing our constructed identity and need as ‘workers’ to take precedent over consideration of the ecological effects of some jobs and yet, despite all this, it continues to justify and maintain itself through layers of hegemony (Adkin, 1998; Bauman, 2005; Paehlke, 1998; Williams, 1989). We in fact do not even have a positive, emancipatory vision of work at the collective level. Logically there is no such vision that could be predicated on our existing notion of economy. Moreover, nowhere near these levels of work are needed to sustain life in our time. We are working largely to perpetuate an economy whose profits retain the wealth of a small number of individuals, and to sustain a level of consumption for a portion of the human population that is abstracted from real human need (Adkin, 1998; Bauman, 2005; Morris, 1890 [2003]; Paehlke, 1998; Williams, 1989).

Adkin (1998) encompasses these social concerns under the overarching question of quality of life, oriented to valuation of our bodily and relational needs. By now she stresses, a wide range of subjects finds that our dominant model of work, whether in meaningless full-time employment or in ‘unemployment,’ is painful and alienating, leading to struggles for gender equality and to modern splits between body and mind; it quite simply makes us sick. She suggests we need an alternate logic that conceives solutions such as reduced work time, redistribution of income and some form of basic income or government subsidies to a sector of socially useful employment, all of which would shift focus from growth of consumption and resource pillage to growth of free time. She posits a list of human needs encompassing basic security of subsistence, meaningful work and creativity, and time for experiences which restore our relationships with our communities and with nature. These are common enough understandings and notions at a personal level but Adkin’s point is that naming such needs and their deprivation collectively is central to the discourse of radical and plural democracy. Rather, with neoliberal economic restructuring, the realm of the political has drastically shrunk and we see the monopolization of decision-making and criteria by elites (Appadurai, 1996 [2008]; Bauman, 1998, 2005). Certainly our habits of work and leisure are ingrained in work ethics of different cultures and labour movements; the choice of freedom over forms of compensation (consuming) will not be automatic or universal. Thus Adkin (1998) believes we need a cultural struggle to transform values while making alternative choices structurally possible (307).
Adkin (1998) is concerned to show that our Fordist work model is implicitly gendered, and jeopardizes well-being and childcare in families both lone and two-parent. Urban agglomerations of full-time workers have structured our very physical environment with regard to housing, transportation, land-use and services, locating families far from natural experiences both spatially and culturally. Impacts of this include a radical separation between town and country and the dependence of a large portion of the population on commodified food, connecting factory to mall to household via automobile. People are routinely displaced from their communities to find work. The demands of this model allow us no time to learn new skills and knowledges such as music or carpentry.

Adkin differentiates the deprivations of different social groups. For professionals and middle strata it is mainly loss of time and reward of meaning in our work roles. For the unemployed or occasionally employed, it is the threat of material deprivation, marginalization and criminalization. The working poor, so expanded by the slashing of social security and low minimum wage, suffer the worst of both conditions. Any movement for social change must name these experiences and clearly proclaim that the norms of work in our society, and the treatment of humans as expendable and mobile factors of production entail profound alienation and loss (304). This requires discourse about the conditions for happiness. Adkin reminds us that consumption is not about greed but about compensation for the deprivation and exhaustion of our capitalist work model. Our supposed ‘choices’ in this regard are not free at all. Such compensation is essential to the moulding and disciplining of individuals as workers. She cites Marcuse’s observation that conformist consciousness militates against the rise of radical character structure (316). Thus, to be effective, environmentalists must come not from an ascetic, depriving approach, but from the recognition of deprivation and as defenders of security of subsistence and happiness of being. Ecology ...must become a language of desire (306). In short, to build a social movement, citizens and activists need to link discursively the needs subjects are expressing to democratic principles, to arguments about conditions for happiness, and to concrete proposals for change. Adkin further critiques ecologists as often belonging to a predominantly white, middle-class movement, members of which must challenge their own complicity in relationships of domination.

**The Individual as Worker**

As individuals, we encounter and negotiate this model, both in the outside worlds and along with the inherited attitudes of our family context, with our own natures and the particular conditions and opportunities we will encounter. Whatever that configuration might be, we are likely to be socialized into
a specialized, competitive, and abstracted notion of work, and pressured by factors such as the need to have the right training or credentials to avoid undesirable jobs. Whether searching for work locally or on a global, geographically open platform, we are compelled to package ourselves for a ‘job market’ whose methods reflect the economy it sustains. We must adhere to a strict regime of resumes and cover letters with all the requisite language and jargon to convince employers that we are the product they want, sometimes to the extent of adopting the approaches of ‘personal branding,’ whereby individuals are encouraged ...to sell themselves by determining (or creating) an identity that is notable and distinguishable... (Miller, 2012 [2009/2006], 265). Though this can be cast as a solution to today’s uncertain economic environment for some (such as white professionals), it effectively marginalizes other groups who might be economically disadvantaged, and ignores larger issues regarding our economic system (265). Part of the regime of marketing ourselves for the employment market is that even if we have experienced negative or undermining conditions in the workplace, we are expected to present ourselves as cheery flawless workers when we interview for our next job, rather than as discerning agents and advocates for our own fulfillment and well-being. Unless we happen to inherit a job through family or connections, the question of what work we do will be tied competitively to training, choices available or what access we can competitively gain. Because of our abstracted notion of work, there is no certainty that our work will have any intrinsic connection to our locality, community, or our pleasures or capacities. The specific work we do will either conform and be accepted, or may be disapproved by our families. Or we may encounter the force of attitudes towards work within our families that differ entirely from our own values and definitions of work.

If we are among the more fortunate these days, we may work for an institution where all the trappings and jargon of a ‘positive work culture’ are in place, focusing our attention on its compensations and on our identity within it, rather than on concern that the institution’s corporate values and activities might support or perpetuate some of the most ecologically and socially destructive initiatives occurring across the globe. We may entirely buy the model of work we have inherited and fit it very well. I would argue as discussed in Part Two that a hegemonic effect of capitalism is that many of us are environmentally socialized and moulded to find congruence between our lives and the available models of work. It is our very structure of feeling, or the orientation of the collective psyche, to participate in and reproduce this reality. The human potential movement of the 60s and 70s and its analogous notions of meaningful work, which took hold in some subcultures and locations as mentioned above, encouraged the individual worker to assess and value their own aptitudes and find their ideal job. The question of our employment could now be filtered through a new-age or esoteric lens to search out a vocation. Such approaches, though valid as implicitly
lived within an integral culture, come with their own hazards in our competitive, capitalist framework, where our innate developmental processes do not always mesh on demand with our egoic ideas of what we feel we should be doing.

Commentaries by Bookchin (1992 [1995]), on communalism as it impacts work, and by Berry (2002) as they formulate local economies, can throw light on the implications of our individual relation to meanings of work. Bookchin (1992[1995] valorizes the notion of work in which ... people see themselves as citizens guided by the needs of their community and region rather than by personal proclivities and vocational concerns (265). Berry’s (2002) articulation of local economy on the other hand speaks eloquently for the role of vocation, but the term for Berry accords with a meaning where an individual’s ‘vocation’ aligns fittingly with their place within a community, while Bookchin uses the term here as a more typically abstracted notion. They are nonetheless expressing the same vision of work, as activity woven into a connected cultural context. For Berry, among the many costs of the total economy, the loss of the principle of vocation is in fact the most symptomatic and the most critical from a cultural standpoint. He asserts that, it is by the replacement of vocation with economic determinism that the exterior workings of a total economy destroy the character and culture also from the inside. He further states that it is by way of the principle and practice of vocation that sanctity and reverence enter into the human economy. It was thus possible for traditional cultures to conceive that “to work is to pray” (258). Instead, under what Berry terms the total economy, work is determined and imposed by the economy. Referring to this age of the industrial and then the knowledge economy, Wirzba (Berry, 2002) comments on the impacts on our work life, leading to an improper or inauthentic sense of human identity and vocation, where enforced specializations make us ignorant and unaccountable to broader human contexts, and rob us of basic human skills – growing food, maintaining a home, caring for and educating children, promoting friendship and cooperation, facing illness and death... (xi). We can read then, that in the human, local economy that Berry is articulating, experiences of work at the individual level would ramify as intrinsically meaningful and connected.

Indeed, a further effect of our model of work and its hegemonic strategies is its extensive absorption of our self-and social identities. Our idea of work has become a reified realm, the existential stage upon which we are compelled to project our energies, aims, survival anxieties, and ideas of success and failure. We literally frame our life narratives and personal mythologies of experience within its parameters. That is, at some point in history, a notion of what work we do – severed from whatever existential, creative activity we might do within a communally-sustaining context and now imposed on us as legitimating
activity in a capitalist society – became a disembodied cultural signifier for *who we are*. This is an ironic inverse of the fact, discussed in Part Two, that in medieval times the individual was identified by her position, as for instance, peasant, artisan, baker, or knight (Williams, 1961). This can indeed be read as the organic and rightful prototype for the contemporary way we are identified with our jobs when people ask us what we do. In the medieval version, these occupations were fundamental to community and sustenance of life, even if there was little individual ‘freedom’ in such contexts. In contrast, we are to a large degree cast adrift (Bauman, 1998, 2007; Giddens, 1991) from such connected contexts, and the work we do will most often be abstracted from a communal matrix and might bear little relation to our real capacities or aims, or may not be rewarded financially sufficient for quality of life.

This absorption of our identities and undermining of our everyday social contributions and subsistence security has several nuances and implications for cultural revisioning and counter-hegemonic discourse. The absorption itself is a double injury and disconnect: first the severance of a notion of work from a communal, life-affirming context, and then the absorption of one’s (nullified) individuality into that work role (and/or organization), or in terms of whether one has one or not. This identification with legitimising work acts to void representation of the richness of what might be our alternate occupations and social contributions in the realm of everyday life: what we (simply) do, think, feel, occupy ourselves with, or intensely care about, whatever or wherever we use and enact our human capacities for love, commitment, dedication, whatever we might consider our ‘life’s work’ (Adkin, 1998; Gorz, n.d.; Highmore, 2002; Morris, 1890 [2003]). It nullifies valuations of individuality and activity that lie outside its terms and refuses economic compensation for them. It serves hegemony well to define us this way; to exist outside its terms is intrinsically threatening to those who subscribe to it. Not only does such difference fail to serve the profit regime, or possibly call upon its resources in the way of welfare provision, or implicitly challenge the life choices of friends or families, but it can also threaten the system by the power of protest. We are seeing this potential in the Occupy Movement during 2011 and 2012 (Klein, 2011; Occupy, 2011; Occupy 2012; Solnit, 2011). The voice of the Occupy Movement is an encouraging appearance addressing such concerns even if it is not necessarily or yet a comprehensive critique of the system that conditions the inequality it is protesting. It suggests that our cultural crisis is approaching a level of urgency where action organically emerges from historical force. By means of such widespread presence and articulation, the notion of the ‘99%’ of the population who are deprived under a socially-unjust system thereby finds its way into popular social and political discourse.
Until we live in a world where the principle of justice obtains, *that each member of the community should perform the task for which he (sic) is fitted by nature...*, we might follow the ideal of finding work that is as organic to one’s life as possible, that is, it satisfies a convergence in space and time between one’s aptitudes and passions and where possible, the claims of the community context (physical or otherwise) in which we find ourselves in any life period (Berry, 2002, citing Coomaraswamy, 258). Such a confluence between our personal concerns and our work life might come in the form of working for an organization whose aim one shares passionately or it might be about having a business or about being a farmer or an artist. The point remains that such solutions are private and particular ones, and will occur for a minority of the population rather than as a fact of culture.

**FROM WORK ETHIC TO BASIC INCOME**

How did this model of work that we think of as ordinary and natural, come about? Bauman’s (2005) narrative in *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* traces how the ‘work ethic’ evolved from the beginnings of industrialization, taking business and economy out of its place in the household in order to populate the new factories and occupy the poor to pre-empt potential revolution. Eventually the welfare state evolved to retain the labour force during temporary unemployment and economic gaps and changes. But the well-off became more wary around justification for social provision with more confidence in their work roles and in the growing consumer society they were privy to. With welfare support levels and quality diminishing all the while, they felt it was better to just keep faith in ongoing work and retain the higher wages and that whatever private insurance or other solutions they had access to would be better than welfare anyway. Welfare has become more and more marginalized and perceived as a problem, though now the problem is failing the duty to consume, rather than failing the ‘work ethic.’ Alongside these developments, with globalization and a more nonmaterial economy in the last decades, there is less need for a labour force and the economy actually thrives with more unemployment, outsourcing, downsizing, and related trends. Though there is no more real need for full employment, the pressure to remain part of the workforce continues unabated.

In Bauman’s account, until global space and resources were used up, there was an escape route as mass numbers of people could be disconnected from their work and land to migrate elsewhere, but now that the planet is officially (that is politically) ‘full’, there is nowhere left to go. Corporations can migrate but labour is still tied locally so often now it is the local, internal population that is barred from employment. The always socially-constructed poor now have no role, either as needed for the economy or as part of the
divine chain as they were historically perceived, or to provide motivation for social compassion. They are just outside of the norm, so every excuse exists to attempt to render them invisible. Social problems become distorted and rewritten as problems of law and order, and the media all cooperate with this version of reality. But further, the poor do not really protest in our culture. The work ethic is now a cover-up for the failings of society, obscuring the true present state and unique conditions around the poor. The U.S. leads this trend through its diminishing official definitions of ‘poor’ which helps to disappear them. Meanwhile, our unquestioned conceptions of work remain in force. Bauman (2005) paraphrases Gregory Bateson to the effect that once the loss of moral community is combined with the advanced technology of tackling whatever is seen as a vexing problem, your chance of survival will be that of a snowball in hell (116). Bauman reminds us that this way we have come to understand work is part of an active imaginary.

**Hopes for Sustainable Work**

Paehlke (1998) draws out the connections between economy, ecology and work, citing the way our naturalized attitudes to work – the god-given idea of the 40-hour week and our globalization work ethic (previously Protestant work ethic) – dovetail in many ways with our economic priorities in terms of wanting to put in the least and get out the most, along with our willingness to risk the environment by prioritizing employment considerations. He proposes a centrist ideology of environment between the two positions of capital and labour. Capitalism has proven now that unregulated ideas of growth and production do not in fact guarantee employment for everyone and is only taxing all resources on the planet. Structural unemployment is rampant by the logic of our present model. Rapid global economic integration since the 70s has outmoded so many manufacturing, service, and managerial jobs and led the drift of manufacturing to poorer nations. All work became insecure, whether rich or poor; downsizing became accepted as inevitable. This created less incentive to environmental priorities, and further, the 70s version of environmentalism called for zero materialism and growth. Now with globalization and the rise of green industry, economy and environment can more viably partner.

Paehlke cites alternative approaches such as work time reduction and early/incremental retirement, so that all have access to work. Our reduced work time does certainly not guarantee that our leisure is not also damaging to the environment but ideally, work time redistribution (as chosen over prevailing unemployment, welfare and spread of poverty) brings the possibility of several interrelated positive benefits: more family and personal time, while reduced income then ties in a feedback loop to responsible consumption and ecological practices, and more time to be able to manage and implement such practices.
In turn, this could lead to higher productivity, remove the burden of low-wage service jobs from a sector of the population and decrease the breakdown of families, which has enormous economic costs in social policies (such as police, health, and welfare costs) and community life. The effect on government tax revenue with such changes should be neutral enough, he suggests. Paehlke points out, however, that neither capitalists nor workers have shown much concern or sense of responsibility about these issues. Yet environmental and employment issues cannot be separated. Environmental issues do tend to enhance employment opportunities but the extent to which employment pressures oppose environmental interests was underestimated in the 70s; few governments intervened with policies that could have supported both.

Paehlke cites Andre Gorz (Gorz, n.d.) as the thinker who has come closest to resolving these contradictions and challenges. In the 80s, Gorz saw the declining need for work and wage labour as libratory and predicted a maximum 20-hour work week eventually, based on productivity gains being diverted one third to increased earnings and two thirds to more leisure time. Gorz also felt this would naturally call our productivist model into question. He saw a movement from the self-management of time to the self-management of life, wherein a fixed income could be associated with a limited amount of work (say 1000 hours a year instead of the present 1600) to be divided over a lifetime according to our own needs:

One thousand hours per year could, for example, be divided into twenty per week, done in two and a half days, or ten days per month, or twenty-five weeks per year, or ten months spread out over two years - without any loss of real income of course... By allowing people to work more or less during certain periods in their lives, this arrangement allows them to be ahead or behind in the amount of work they have to do per year; to interrupt their professional activity over a number of months or years without loss of income in order, for example, to learn a new trade, set up a business, bring up children, build a house, or undertake an artistic, scientific, humanitarian or co-operative project. (Gorz, n.d. interview)

Gorz remanded the labour movement and trade unions to their cultural roots in his attempts to transform our work model:

The labour movement should not forget here that its origins lie in working-class cultural associations. It will not be able to survive as a movement unless it takes an interest in people's self-realization outside their work as well as in it, and helps or participates in the
creation of sites and spaces in which people are able to develop their ability to take responsibility for their own lives and self-manage their social relations: open universities, community schools and community centres; service-exchange co-operatives and mutual-aid groups; cooperative repair and self-production workshops; discussion, skills-transfer and art and craft groups, and so on. (Gorz, n.d., interview)

Paehlke (1998) notes the need for an update, appreciation, and critique of Gorz’s work. Despite Gorz’s ideas, there is the issue as discussed above, of how in modernity much of our individual and social identity derives from work. Gorz also did not anticipate the pace of global economic integration since the 70s or the extent to which new technologies would eliminate industrial and managerial jobs, compounded by the drift of manufacturing work to workers in poor nations, so that all work was insecure by the 90s. He also overestimated labour enthusiasm for these envisioned changes, and failed to consider potential environmental impacts of increased leisure over the crafts, food cultivation, etc. that he had imagined. Yet now capitalism is even less able to achieve full employment and is more entrenched than ever. Reduction in work also faces challenges such as resistance from the young. The changes may have to come mainly from economically secure or older workers through for instance, earlier or partial retirement, which could be balanced by delay in full retirement to 67 or 70 (reserving government pension payments until then). Paehlke suggests other contemporary measures such as the shorter work week, the spread of four year income over five years with every fifth year off, regular leave-of-absences, and the now frequently used contract-or-part-time work arrangements. These latter, which are usually exploitative, could be validated by legislation requiring proportional benefits, along with other protections. Other issues might still pertain, Paehlke suggests, such as how would spending habits and patterns alter, that is, what would old spenders cut out and what might new spenders emphasize. But his analysis simply begs the question that these are larger questions of value, not about quantities of time. Our patterns of consumerism, as we will discuss below, cannot be separated from our patterns of work.

Whatever might catalyze such changes, environmental organizations cannot lean as they did in the 70s and 80s on apocalyptic scenarios. They do not seem realistic so far and, Paehlke suggests, we may come to find some damage not so hard to deal with ultimately or will get around it. The best future, he claims, has to be sold politically. Environmental organizations must support measures that promote access to work and options for less than ‘full-time’ work. They can play the role of being explicit about relationships between the culture of commodification, the global competitiveness work ethic, and environmental protection. Both capital and labour can ask for balanced limits on both profits and wages, and balanced
governmental budgets. Equitable redistribution of work draws environmental thinking towards social and economic considerations, in mostly nonmaterial ways, and expands the idea of sustainability beyond purely environmental concerns. Further, ecological initiatives can actually increase related employment opportunities. The sustainable development discourse of the 80s and 90s has also brought environment and economy closer together, though sometimes in a questionable way such as through the proliferation of ‘green’ products. Paehlke (1998) prescribes that rich nations should decouple economic growth from both expansion of resource extraction (energy and material taxes can help this decline) and reduce the proportion of the population that must be employed 40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year, or anything near that (280). Ideally such a politics of time will shift both consumption and production patterns, but not without broader education and knowledge of the environmental impacts of consumption practices, and the challenging of our idea of entitlement to whatever our human whims might seek. Further, Paehlke suggests, we can place more tax burdens on such behaviours. Approaches such as sharing car ownership, better food and household energy efficiency, and the availability of more time precisely to make these changes would reduce living and health costs and lower environmental impact. Further measures would encompass the selective provision of environmentally mindful public services (he cites Ontario’s Green Energy Policy), and the sound planning of leisure activity in the local community to pre-empt unnecessary travel. We do need a comprehensive alternative vision to the prevailing model, with cornerstones such as employment security and expanding free time. The point to be drawn from these analyses for this discussion is how little has changed concerning our meanings of work. Instead, since Paehlke wrote this in the mid 90s, pressure for growth continues as globalization has continued to intensify.

Some Configurations of Work in a Globalized World

John Berger (2001) wrote (even before the advent of a digitally-connected world) that ...socialism, let alone communism, cannot be fully achieved in one country so long as capitalism exists as a global system... (189). A picture of the contemporary human experience of work cannot be complete without considering how economic globalization has further reconfigured work and worker identity since Paehlke’s writing and in ways that Gorz did not foresee. Sassen (2007) conceptualizes cities as production sites for the information industries of our time. These global cities, along with export-processing zones and offshore banking centres, are the vast material infrastructure that global processes, and the links that bind them, require. We tend to think only of the invisible global communications and transmissions but, as Sassen (2007) and Massey (2005) stress, there is no fully dematerialized firm or industry. To recover this material infrastructure is, in Sassen’s view, to recover the presence of sectors and workers who are an
integral part of that economy but often low-paying and manual, done by women and immigrants, and who are never represented as part of the global economy. Rather the top, visible level of professionals (techne) gets valorized and the distance between them increases. For Sassen as a sociologist this has meant working in several systems of representation and constructing spaces of intersection and discontinuity which she calls analytic borderlands. She aims to reconstitute these in terms of economic operations whose properties are a function of that discontinuity. Sassen analyzes this global economy as contributing to a new geography of centrality and marginality. It partly reproduces existing inequalities but is also specific to current forms of growth operating throughout the structure of the economy, the distribution of telecommunications systems and the structure of employment. This sees global cities accumulate immense concentrations of economic power whereas cities that were manufacturing centres suffer decline. Financial services produce super profits, while industrial services barely survive. Other cities in the same countries as the global cities such as London, New York, Tokyo, Toronto, Bangkok, and Mexico City, are increasingly excluded from economic processes. Likewise what seems in reality an internationalized labour market for low-wage and manual service workers, continues to be couched in terms of immigration, the narrative of an earlier historical period, or subsumed under notions of ethnic economy or informal economy. Immigration and ethnicity are constituted as otherness.

Sassen (2007) asks whether globalization is creating new classes and social forms, observing how global professionals (eg. government officials dealing in transnational networks) occupy a partially denationalized space, between national and global, and can be called ‘global classes’. This designation has both subjective and objective aspects. They gain access to countries through their work even though for instance, bodies such as NAFTA and WTO are not supposed to have anything to do with immigration. The second class she sees is the emergent group of disadvantaged or resource-poor workers and activists, including key sectors of civil society, diasporic networks and transnational immigrant communities and households. One can think of these classes, she suggests, as bridging the thick national environment and global dynamics. She finds it is at the top and the bottom of the social system that the national state has weakened its grip in shaping membership and identity. They are not necessarily new social forms; some have existed before, but today they assume a new meaning and they are aware of that. Deregularization and privatization have weakened attachment to the national economy. National investors can operate in global markets, major firms can set up operations in any country’s leading business centre and have worldwide networks of affiliates. This mobile transnational professional class is more defined by its control than by its ownership of the means of production, more by its orientation to corporate globalization or implementing of global treaties, than its former aim of intergovernmental collaboration or
protection of national economies, as in the post-WWII era. Though the institutional power of firms is still important, these professionals have highly developed networks of their own and provide valuable information to firms and investors. The basic agenda for this class is profit-making. Sassen (2007) notes how this class must be distinguished from a country’s national business community. For the second class of disadvantaged or resource-poor workers and activists, she sees their localized activist struggles significantly as localizations of global civil society. Cities are seen as critical for this global civil society as they contain two key spaces for this – the concrete space for politico-civic activities and the state-of-the-art environment for command functions and social reproduction of global corporate capital, which makes the increasingly elusive global corporate sector visible (183). The partly deterritorialized space of, for instance, public-access internet, is also crucial, allowing low-cost communication, distribution and domains where multiple actors from different localities can join in.

She highlights five issues relating to these classes in the setting of global cities: 1) the politico-civic engagement made possible for the disadvantaged in global cities, partially enabled by globalization itself and by the human rights regime, 2) The presence of immigrant communities enables specific transnational forms of engagement, including globalized diasporas, 3) The immediate engagement possible between the disadvantaged and global corporate power, 4) The extent to which new media allows or induces groups to transnationalize their efforts eg. women’s organizations, environment and human rights activists, 5) The extent to which such engagements contribute to denationalization of the global city and thereby enable more global forms of consciousness and membership and belonging even among the disadvantaged or immobile. All these elements are part of localized microstructures of global civil society, producing a kind of transnationalism in situ...We hence see an emergent recognition of globality, often shaped by the knowledge of recurrent struggles and inequities in city after city (184-185). Thus the global becomes visible, producing an ambiguous position between the national and the global for mostly activist, disadvantaged and localized actors.

Issues ensue for the relationship between these classes and the national context. Though the transnational professional class has far more exit options than the others, this class is ultimately more place bound than we might expect, given imagery about it. The reverse holds for disadvantaged workers. They are more embedded than we imagine in what we might think of as the global workplace and transnational politics. As Sassen points out, all this carries implications for class analysis and government policy. These classes are part of a deep economic restructuring and growing demand for both high-level professionals and low-wage service and production workers, especially in global cities. Thus current forms of economic
globalization add to inequality and produce new types of inequalities. We must recognize the interconnections of these social forms and their outcomes. Rather than the standard national class analysis that classifies these low-wage workers as belonging to backward economic sectors, we must see them as essential to global capitalism. For Sassen (2007), a further critical consideration is that these groups get filtered through two distinct political and policy structures: the global professionals through a neoliberal policy that opens a country to them; the lower-level labour market through immigration policies that close a country to them. Filtering both through these older policy frames precisely obscures features of globalization she is trying to illuminate, that this segmentation is part of advanced capitalism and that this global class of low-wage workers heralds more the global future than a backward past, and class analysis needs to factor them in.

Sassen’s mapping of some global work patterns is instructive for visualizing these workers and for imagining the potentials of these new groupings to collaborate or protest in transnational contexts. For instance, her marking the use of different policy frameworks to prompt desired advantage or disadvantage to particular groups brings home the need she mentions to negotiate different forms of representation in order to recover invisible persons, forces and outcomes as she attempts here. Such examples show how hegemony works at a global level. I would add though that these are generalized and do not reveal what specific global ethnographies can illuminate (Burawoy, et al., 2000). My concern would be that many of these worker spaces for instance are precisely de-politicized by the hegemonic force that would make them feel they should be compliant because of immigration stigma, employment vulnerability, and so on. Ultimately we see from accounts like Sassen’s how analyzing globalization ramifies into converging concerns around work, place, and community as a vantage point to query their interrelated meanings, such as her idea of the city as site for a transnational politics.

Across the continuum of kinds and locations of employment, work has changed structure dramatically for individual workers in the last decade, with increasing levels of contingent, contract, part-time and temporary positions signalling the ‘disposable worker,’ with the downsizing of the workforce and the global and service economy (Miller, 2012[2009/2006], 268). This trend has accelerated rapidly since the recent recessions. Even where this ‘flexible’ work is accepted or chosen over more traditional jobs as an attempt to balance work demands with home or family and to limit work life to more humane proportion, it typically comes at a high cost, with lower pay, no benefits and no job security. The greater advantage seems to accrue to the employer in such cases. These issues clearly occur within much larger concerns and questions of value, human rights, and cultural transformation, not simply those of work versus free time,
economic issues, or sensationalist news. Within such transformations, recovery of the connections between work, place, environment, economic and consumer practices would be fully recovered and would be the operating assumption in policy decisions. Communal, self-governed contexts such as Buber (1992, 2002), Bookchin (1992, 1995, 2007) and Williams (1989) depict in Part Two, might ideally emerge in various forms along a continuum, from more locally embedded sites where work and economy are recovered as intrinsic to community to examples of counterhegemonic communities in global cities enacting an emergent transnational political community of work and place (Appadurai, 1996[2008]; Massey, 2005; Sassen, 2007). Rather than niggling over superficial changes within our working structures to create a veneer of control and positiveness, we would ideally be hearing every day in the media about the cultural project of humane work now grounded in an economy that is actual, rather than a symbolic object we see ‘collapsing’ around us. Though fundamental cultural change is the desirable outcome, it is crucial meanwhile that we advocate for viable solutions within our current system for recovery of human potential and managing worker issues. Transformation can occur from multiple directions, both within and outside the functioning model.

**Basic Income**

On the level of social policy, the concept of basic income advocated by Gorz has been proposed from many quarters over several decades, though never widely debated (Adkin, 1998; Bauman, 2005; Offe, 1996; Paehkle, 1998). Bauman supports Offe’s (1996) proposal for a basic income that would decouple income entitlement from income-earning capacity. This would be financed through taxation, doing away with means-testing and assessment of willingness to work. Offe outlines an approach that sees a basic income guaranteed by the state as a social policy necessity, given the ‘present and foreseeable’ employment crisis (writing in 1996). Such an income would be based on the definition of a sociocultural standard of need, which on the one hand would maintain an incentive to paid work, but would avoid tendencies to poverty and division as with current arrangements. This would ideally be based on the principle of the individual rather than the household, which avoids the constraints of traditional gender roles and family authority, but still encourages familial relations that are free of financial constraints. Offe cites the diminishing availability of permanent full-time employment and the increasing proportion of the population who are forced into marginal, undervalued, and unprotected employment. With the gendered roles of wage labour, women are even more likely to be dependent on such kinds of work. Though protected part-time work has increased, its insufficiency to provide independent livelihood, along with the fact of increasing divorce over the decades, means that neither wage labour nor marriage are as likely to
provide women with secure livelihoods. Further, our inherited model of the social state continues to tie the participation, social justice and welfare of citizens, to the normalized status of ‘working citizens,’ whether or not such work is any longer available or necessary. Full employment under this model was at least able to disguise the social inequalities it nonetheless perpetrated. The current situation, Offe (1996) claims, where the better informed and educated gain most from social services, along with lack of attention to ecological consequences, and the associated destruction of traditional forms of life not regulated through the labour market, attests to the social state’s economic and moral failure. He sees a return to this apparently normal model, where much work is devalued, where policy on social insurance and on poverty are divided, as indefensible. As Raymond Williams puts it, ‘welfare capitalism’ has always been a contradiction in terms (Eagleton, 1989 citing Williams, 71).

Bauman (2005) challenges its opponents to find a better solution than Offe’s (1996) and others’ proposed basic income. We could add to their arguments that measures such as basic income have the potential to address and transform many harmful aspects of our operative notion of economy, from within as it were. At the least, it throws a wrench for a good portion of the population into the cycle of meaningless work/exhaustion/consumption, amending to some degree the social injustice of wage gaps and other inequalities, and facing the individual with a greater degree of both freedom and responsibility in life choices. At its greatest potential, it opens a cultural space in which a greater number of individuals might experience a quality of life otherwise impossible, and find their energies reoriented to questioning and countering prevailing capitalist values and systems, ultimately transforming our very notion of economy (Adkin, 1998; Berry, 2002; Morris, 1890 [2003]; Williams, 1989). Whatever the practical obstacles to implementing a form of basic income, Bauman (2005) believes that refusing to consider this, and failing to challenge and change the prevailing social and ethical consensus, will spell disaster. But he also emphasizes how we need to decouple our conception of work from the labour market. Our persisting, gendered conception of work as only paid work dismisses so much of for instance, household and women’s work, and all the work of the moral economy, thereby eroding the very soil of human relationships, moral bonds and social cohesion (119). This damage to ‘quality of life’ is hardly ever distinguished, says Bauman, from our standard of living (120). Offe’s idea would allow us to replace our invented work ethic with the ethics of workmanship. Bauman (2005) cites how Veblen years ago pointed out our human instinct of workmanship, as opposed to our artificially constructed work ethic that ties our right to survive as a commodity to commodified labour (112). He acknowledges that it is tempting to dismiss such ideas as another utopia in this age which he sees as a graveyard of utopias, which have been
replaced by individual utopias. But Bauman (2005) suggests that utopia is in fact our major resource against the closure of such a system.

**William Morris – *How Shall We Live?***

In William Morris (1834-96) we discover a figure whose critique of the prevailing experience of work was framed within a larger cultural vision of human creativity, well-being and fulfillment. Morris (1890[2003]) not only attributed the self-agency of the artist referenced above, to all humans, and embodied the *instinct of workmanship* which Veblen posited, but decades before Gorz, he critiqued the emerging consumer culture and added his own comprehensive utopian vision to the world, lauded by Bauman himself. Morris (1890 [2003]), the late 19th century British writer and craftsman who was most known for his artistic accomplishments, held deep concerns about the realms of life that he saw diminished through the impact of the industrial revolution: the nature of work, community and social relations; the proliferation of ugliness with the loss of craft, workmanship and the skill of the worker; and the intrinsic connection of all these to social life and ecological concerns. He eventually enacted this critique within a socialist framework. He felt that to educate and organize should be the key aims of the middle class intellectual in order to bring about *conditions that would make a revolution (complete, economic) inevitable, self-generated and irreversible* (17). He was pragmatic and self-confessedly ignorant of economics and political theory; he came to see public speaking as the form of social action he could best perform to disseminate his socialist ideas. From his late 50s until his death in 1882, he gave over 600 speaking engagements. Morris was resistant to both electoral politics and to anarchy. His response to all the extreme variations of what he saw as pure socialism, was the utopian novel *News from Nowhere*, envisioning a communal organization of society.

As reflected in his novel, Morris (1890[2003]) affirmed the centrality of the body and everyday life as the measure of utopian conditions, over institutions and systems. He saw the importance of the *education of desire* to supplement formal education in socialist principles. He was concerned with the physicality of life, and motivated by his belief in the joy and creativity of work removed from any associations of Christian moralism. His vision of work and the body was entirely secular and refuted both the ascetism of his period as well as the notion of luxury, seeing both as by-products of industrial capitalism. If anything he was accused of excess sensuality (Thompson, 1955 [1977]). The novel reveals a world where emotional complexity has disappeared in favour of the simplicity of desire, which is usually met in this utopian setting. Art forms such as the novel are obsolete in *Nowhere*, as they were seen to have served
essentially to indulge the constructed problems and sorrows of the middle classes within the capital system. Likewise the free and communal relationships that prevail in *Nowhere* bear testament to Morris’s critique of the bourgeois family unit as a form continuous with the economic structure of capitalism, with women forced into a role equivalent to the proletariat under capitalism. Some traditional women’s roles were assumed to continue in Morris’s view, as he saw their issues largely resolved within the project of socialism. Regarding marriage, he portrays women in the novel becoming free of its customary bonds of legality and its moral dictates against sexual choice. Unions can be easily sundered without stigma, acknowledging that love is not a rational matter. The raising and education of children is a community matter, with communal homes and public spaces replacing the primacy of the private hearth.

The key question to the novel and for our contemporary reality would seem to be: how did such a state of affairs come about? Morris (1890 [2003]) was ambivalent about whether, in reality, the needed revolution might in the end, need a short phase of violence or could be entirely accomplished through the coherent and directed will of the masses once educated and organized (40). Agitation itself, the dominant approach in his milieu, was not enough he believed. (This raises questions on what forms of protest the current Occupy Movement might take, more than a century later [Occupy, 2011; Occupy, 2012; Klein, 2011; Solnit, 2011]. Morris (1890 [2003]) believed there first had to be a revolution in the minds of working men and women. He had marched with the Socialist League in the Bloody Sunday March on Trafalgar Square in 1887, and saw firsthand the government’s readiness to use violence to quell an uprising. However he also read such a violent response as a sign of the dominant group’s recognition of the power and inevitability of the movement going forward. Carrying this motif of a historical sequence of protests into his novel as the back story, narrated at one point by a main character, these protests arrive eventually at the desired state of affairs. The sequence of events in the final determining hours days and hours (essentially an inevitable civil war) leading up to it are detailed. However he does not describe exactly how the changed state of consciousness came about except that it took hold with a longing for freedom and equality, akin if you please to the unreasonable passion of the lover (42). Such emphasis echoes Buber’s (1992, 2002) on the importance of will power as conditioning the emergence of community. So we learn no details but can register Morris’s rationale that once the requisite state of mind is attained by the people, the rest flows easily. Once we arrive at what he calls nowhere, that being the end of history and any need for change, people live in a perpetual present and care little for history beyond the last harvest or baby born. Morris himself does not pretend such a state to be without its dangers: Isn’t the present diminished without historical remembrance? Is this really what we wanted...? Or does utopia need to be continually sought, in the attempt to eventually arrive at what was really meant all along (Morris,
1890[2003], 44)? This echoes Buber’s (1992, 2002) claim that community is an emergent process. Morris’s vision, based in (presumed) internal self-regulation of the sensual world as its social basis, differs greatly from the strong sacred core of Buber’s vision with its more realistic balancing with historical contingencies. Simplistic in some of its implications as Nowhere seems to be, one has to wonder for instance, if the intelligent citizenry of any utopia can reasonably be conceived who would opt to forfeit cultural remembrance as one of the key pillars of an ethical culture?

Morris, before adopting a socialist perspective, had set about as a craftsman to revive the ‘minor arts’ of England, using his business Morris & Co. (known as The Firm), as a base, and studying to an intricate degree the materials and technologies of craft including embroidery, woodcutting, pottery, weaving and tapestry-work, even going so far as to try to revive the use of vegetable dyes. From the perspective of his great success he eventually also saw that those who cared about such work could not change the tide of the times and its escalating consumerism and mass production of shoddy goods. He moved the basis of his revolt, which began with these decorative arts, into the political and social sphere (Thompson, 1955 [1977]). He set about learning socialist theory almost like another craft (MacCarthy, 1994). MacCarthy stresses that Morris’s politics were far from woolly, despite accusations otherwise. She cites rather the precision of his insight:

> He knew exactly what the bourgeois motivation was, since he was ‘one of us’. He understood the workings of commerce; he belonged to it. As a person who made things he understood completely the essential disciplines of materials and techniques. As a writer, he was up against the nuances of language.....He was accurate and dangerous enough to know that the things he most valued would go under in the end. (xv)

Some observers such as Raymond Williams, found the writing in Morris’s public lectures to be more potent and of greater value than his prose or utopia, which he felt could be sacrificed if it meant getting people to read pointed lectures such as How we Live, and How we might Live; The Aims of Art; Useful Work versus Useless Toil; and A Factory as it might be (Thompson, 1955 [1977], 793). Morris’s protests in the 1884 lecture, Art and Socialism, at a society confronted with ‘adulterated food and drink’ and a London environment ‘choked by filth,’ give a startling perspective on where we stand over a century later. For Morris (1890 [2003]) it is plain that we have paid too high a price for the material gains of modernity, with the loss of pleasure in daily work, the associated loss of art, but worst of all for Morris, is for us to be so largely unconscious of the loss, or so little conscious of it that we believe all is well (clearly describing the condition of what we would call hegemony). If we would relate labour to inclination, need, and wise
use of surplus, we would see that *the very difference in men’s (sic) capacities and desires, after the common need of food and shelter is satisfied, will make it easier to deal with their desires in a communal state of things* (Morris, 1890[2003], 260). He cites these real needs as those of, first, health, which is tied directly to the satisfaction of life needs and the corollary, that ill-health is rooted in poverty and stressful living conditions; second, access to liberal education according to our capacities, and including one or ideally more than one handicraft that can benefit the community, along with abundant leisure to facilitate this learning and including the possibility of periods of travel for learning in particular ways; third, ‘good work,’ according to capacity and desire, and in workplaces that are pleasant; fourth, that partly by way of the rightful pleasure of work, this would metamorphose more and more into the new birth of art, where art and the workplace merge; and finally, that material life should be ‘pleasant, generous, and beautiful,’ else, said Morris, *...I do not want the world to go on... I feel sure that the time will come when people will find it difficult to believe that a rich community such as ours, having such command over external Nature, could have submitted to live such a mean, shabby, dirty life as we do* (264).

How does someone like Morris, whose vision so creatively and comprehensively restored the links between the body, work, desire, art and ecology, become remembered selectively for his artwork (astounding a contribution though it is)? Many writers on ideas of work here echo Morris’s inscription of the body, desire, beauty, and well-being as central concerns in transforming values of our work culture, yet his name never arises in such critiques. Here we see again the syndrome of the broad thinker being marginalized or dis-remembered, like Raymond Williams or Gregory Bateson. But worse, we see again, with all these and including Wendell Berry below, how such broad thinking and critique seemingly fails to penetrate cultural consciousness, as it must do to alter conditions. Even Gorz noted of his own ideas (though he does seem overly optimistic about social trends):

> The cultural and societal change involved here demands from each of us a change in attitude which no state, government, political party or trade union can bring about on our behalf. We shall have to find a meaning in life other than gainful employment, the work ethic and productivity, and struggles centred on issues other than those implied in wage relations. The extent of these cultural changes is such that it would be futile to propose them *were it not for the fact that the changes presently under way are already heading in this direction* (Gorz, n.d.).

One wonders again as mentioned in the introduction, how such literature is mediated or not through academic and literary channels, or what obstructions exist for its broad dissemination. Did Morris’s work
have any real opportunity to reach the wider audiences it warranted? Williams (1989) lauded Morris for integrating into socialist thinking the challenge to the idea of production as *insensibly an end in itself*, rather than being governed by general human standards of need and beauty.

When Morris brought these questions together, and campaigned over so many issues, he was making the kind of junction of two different traditions which ought to have come earlier, ought to have been better sustained after Morris, and ought to be much clearer and stronger than it is today. (216)

Such forceful comments only fuel the question we should be asking – where are such voices today? Williams suggests that Morris was all too easy to dismiss because of his too simplistic vision and his illusion that there had been, before industrial production, a pre-existing peasant and craftsman order, located by him and many others in the Middle Ages. Morris himself was aware of the inevitable effect on his ideas of his experience of affluence, so that in his utopia, problems of production and of human sustenance seem to have been pushed out of sight. Williams notes that such assumptions have been damaging to the ecological movement. He sees it as a sustainable approach when individuals or small groups affect at once a different way of life, as many did in the 60s and 70s. However he considers it misguided when the ecological movement attempts to address such demands to a body of leaders who precisely will not accept such ideas that challenge their world view. Rather the message needs to be conveyed by informing and encouraging public opinion. In short, the politics must be confronted; social and economic dislocations are clearly needed to accomplish such changes.

These points I believe, only beg the question in our own historical moment, not that Morris was wrong or naive, but that even now we lack the will, the passionate longing (Buber and Morris’s mutually resonant terms of requirement), to alter and renegotiate the meanings we have created, as Morris or Williams would have us do. This is where socialism can contribute, Williams (1989) believes, and in his view, negotiation is precisely the necessary work. The damage and the limits to resources use, these are the main case that Williams believes socialists must build: *the fact of real material limits to the existing mode of production and to the social conditions which it is also producing* (221). This must be based not on projections which can often be unreliable, but on the exposed illusion that enough production can solve problems of poverty and inequality when its core value is profit. What matters is the way forms of production are decided and the way their products are distributed. Williams acknowledges this clearly implies perspectives beyond the national, and, observing the oil crisis at the time, astutely anticipates the tensions that will develop between nations as the developed world continues to assert its dominance over
patterns of use of resources from the developing world to sustain their levels of consumption. Renewed interest in agriculture, alternate forms of energy and transport and locally-based work/solutions will not, he believes, sufficiently meet the challenge required to our whole way of life. The problem of resources...will become the problem of war or peace. Our communication technologies (now even far more sophisticated) will ensure, Williams (1989) rightly claims, that we construct the cause of hostile foreigners exercising a stranglehold over our necessary supplies (222-224). This frightening indictment of contemporary hegemony written in 1982 leads to Williams’ concluding argument that any notion of standard of life must encompass the value of maintenance of peace. We need to link our argument for ecology to the avoidance of war and perhaps more effectively and precisely to the habits of those who would not wish their consumption habits interrupted by the threat of war. Yet for all this, such conflict, through inertia and contradiction, may well occur. Williams remained hopeful for a social analysis where ecology and economics become, as they should be, a single science. He stresses the challenge to all of us of such changes and the way they will have to be negotiated rather than imposed.

THE CONSUMING QUEST FOR BEAUTY

I tell you I feel dazed at the thought of the immensity of work which is undergone for the making of useless things. (Morris, 1890 [2003]: from Lecture Art and Socialism, 1884, 253)

Such analysis as Williams hoped for is indeed essential and must rise from every quarter. The culture of consumption which is intrinsic to our model of work and economy is the point of change perhaps most difficult to achieve. It is part of the whole pattern by which we seem blindly bound to the system as configured, and is the matter we will now turn to. We can hope that such a pattern can be confronted and shifted within ourselves before and alongside the political negotiation that Williams sees as necessary for any hope of maintaining our standard of life. Consumption connects over to so many things: how it functions, what it pre-empt and destroys socially and ecologically, its relation to aesthetics and beauty as intrinsic components of life, and the challenges and means for responding to its harmful effects.

Wachtel (1998) hones in on key features of overconsumption. Prevailing economic approaches have left out the real costs of goods under the rubric of externalities. The way we consume is cast as rational, free, and chosen so that those who question the ethics of what we produce and buy can be easily dismissed as elitist and as social engineers. The entire dynamic of a growth-oriented economy requires discontent, and further, our expectations are continually raised by advertising so that no satisfaction is possible. This echoes Williams’ point above regarding how, in cultural change, our expectations adjust rapidly to new
developments. I suggest that this tendency increases exponentially over time to become what we now term a sense of entitlement. Yet, as Wachtel (1998) points out, it has been shown that above the poverty level there is little relation between income and happiness; what matters is love, friendship, community, being part of something larger than oneself. Yet our conception of growth and economy undermines our very capacity for community and human solidarity. We work too much to afford what we don’t need and then deceive ourselves that we do this to *make ends meet* (268). After a century of working towards shorter hours, we remain fixated on the 35-hour week which, as Bauman (2005) pointed out, we treat as god-given and which we label ‘full-time.’ Yet with ever-increasing productivity, we could work less hours. But because we don’t choose this, we have to keep increasing growth to keep levels of available work up. We could spread the work to more people and work less (Gorz, n.d.; Morris, 1890 [2003]; Paehlke, 1998). Instead, in retaining the view of our patterns of employment as normal and necessary, our families and communities suffer.

The vicious circle is that to alleviate the distress of sustaining such a system we consume to comfort ourselves (Adkin, 1998; Paehlke, 1998). What reinforces the hegemony of our work lives, I suggest, is the way the dominant powers co-opt the discourses and aims of positively identified realms such as family, community, care, and perhaps most detrimentally, even creativity by identifying their aims with the aims or values of these realms, in a kind of Orwellian doublespeak with which our everyday local media are saturated. In this way, for instance, profit-oriented businesses are able to brand themselves in terms of caring when they donate to social service organizations. Wachtel (1998) notes that the silver lining is that we know this system does not make us happy, so we don’t need to think about changing it as *sacrifice* (269). Rather we need to think about the ecology of human satisfaction. We need an alternative image where we know the reward of friends, family, reading, and painting. We need alternative modes of economic organization to channel scientific and technological progress towards improvements in health and well-being. This supports the notion of fostering an ethics of care and community and the alternatives to our model of work cited above, as a way forward. But we can go deeper here to consider the patterns that are at work in overconsumption.

Appadurai (2008[1996]) sheds light on some of the mechanisms of consumerism. He attempts to conceptualize what is new about it since the advent of electronic media, highlighting the importance of the relations between consumption and repetition, based on its closeness to the body and its need for habituation. These effects work to structure a temporal rhythm, by which the *inertial logic of repetition* scales up to larger regimes of periodicity such as seasonality and the example of Christmas gift-giving.
(Appadurai, 2008 [1996], 68). In this way, important rites of passage can have consumption markers. He is concerned to point out that these socially organized periodicities of consumption are constitutive of the social meanings of rites of passage, not simply symbolic markers of them; consumption creates time and does not simply respond to it. The realm of fashion is cited as a crucial link between production, merchandising and consumption in capitalist societies, along with nostalgia as a central feature of modern merchandising. This is about teaching consumers to miss things they have never lost. Mass-merchandising techniques not only construct time but influence the factors of repetition and periodization as a mass experience in contemporary societies. Appadurai extends this affect to the commodification of time; with labour, time becomes productive and industrial. Consumption becomes a phenomenological marker of time left over from work, produced by work, and justified by work; a temporal marker of leisure. There is indeed little escape from the rhythms of industrial production. Debt enables this process, claims Appadurai. *Debt is income expansion by other means* (81). In places like the U.S., there is a struggle emerging between consumers and major lenders concerning rival understandings of the future as a commodity. This is intimately tied to the structure of merchandising, fashion, and fantasy. Consumption has become the civilizing work of post-industrial society. Consumption today transforms the experience of time in a way fundamentally different from its 18th and 19th century predecessors.

These innovations in lending have had a remarkable cultural effect, creating an open-ended lifelong sense of potential earnings rather than short cycles of monthly or annual income. *Consumption becomes the engine of earning rather than its horizon* (82). These temporal disciplines of consumption are more powerful because they are less transparent than disciplines of production. This is now the driving force of industrial society and the social practice through which we are drawn into fantasy together with nostalgia. As Appadurai puts it, we are now beyond the consumer revolution to a *revolution of consumption*, where consumption is our principal work (82). We have in effect arrived at a new form of labour, that of navigating temporal flows of consumer credit and purchase, reading fashion messages, managing newly complex domestic finances. This is about labour producing the conditions of consciousness in which buying can occur, which is the hardest kind of work, work of the imagination. Such work is social as well as symbolic. The study of consumption needs to attend to historic, social and cultural conditions under which such work unfolds as a central preoccupation in otherwise very different contemporary societies. He cites how pleasure, as the organizing principle of modern consumption, converges with his arguments regarding time, work, and the body. This pleasure is to be found in the tension between nostalgia and fantasy, where present is represented as already past. He claims that pleasure and the valorization of ephemerality are at the heart of this, expressed at a variety of levels. He sees them as a dominant force,
despite pockets of resistance. He points out how techniques of the body differ in sumptuary and fashion regimes. What is new in this ephemerality is the systematic and generalized linkage of three factors: the aesthetic of ephemerality, the manipulability of the body, and the pleasure of the gaze. This adds up to a radically new relationship among wanting, remembering, being and buying; a criss-crossing of deeply variable histories and genealogies.

Appadurai’s (2008 [1996]) account seems typically jargon-heavy but the connections he draws between work, time, consuming and nostalgia can help us recognize and deconstruct crucial patterns we live by. But theorizing the historical mechanics in this way does not seem sufficient as a critical approach. I suggest that the factor of periodization can be read differently within an alternate conceptualization of consumerism, in which the act of consuming answers unmet aesthetic needs, and in which time itself partakes in aesthetic experience.

In search of beauty

*The teleology of the universe is directed to the production of Beauty.*

(Whitehead, cited by Hillman, Beckley, 1998, 269)

I suggest that our indiscriminate production and our overconsumption are deeply linked ontologically, and not only through the mechanics of availability and the logic of compensatory pleasures for the displeasure of our work lives. William Morris (1890 [2003]) is getting close to this with his articulation of how crucial is the aesthetic facet of life. Arata stresses that what distinguishes Morris’s critique of the consumer culture that was emerging in his time is the intensity of his vision not just of “how we live” but of “how we might live” (Morris, 1890 [2003], 27). Beyond the suffering and degradation many workers endured, which he found indefensible, Morris envisioned an alternative life that focused largely on the making of beautiful and useful things. Arata writes ... *in Morris’s view, the desire to make beautiful things is innately human. Art is simply the material form we give to the satisfaction we feel in exercising our physical and mental energies* (Morris, 1890[2003], 28). For Morris, the ‘wanting’ of art and the yearning for beauty is a primary desire, indistinguishable from communal need. He saw creativity as a common inheritance with no notion of a special class of artists and would see the major arts democratized like the arts of design. Effectively for Morris then, art becomes unalienated labour. Hence in his time, rife with exploitative labour, he saw no real art being produced.

Carrying forward Morris’s work in spirit and practice, I am concerned to register the absence and loss of beauty as a key experience in our culture and as a crucial concern for counterhegemonic discourse. As
Morris registered, beauty is a first and last concern when culture reflects human need and capacity. We would almost want to say about beauty is that it is nothing, that it should be nothing. That is, it arises as humans create and go about sustaining their communities. Peter Schjeldahl (1998) writes,

> There is something crazy about a culture in which the value of beauty becomes controversial. It is crazy not to celebrate whatever reconciles us to life. The craziness suggests either stubborn grievance – an unhappiness with life that turns people against notions of reconciliation to it-or benumbed insensitivity. The two terms may be one. “Beauty” versus beauty. Platitude versus phenomenon. Term of sentimental cant versus dictionary word in everyday use. I want to rescue for educated talk the vernacular sense of beauty from the historically freighted, abstract piety of “Beauty.” (55)

Depth psychologist James Hillman (1998) attempts to restore the idea that beauty is useful, functional, practical (261). In view of the inheritance of the lofty aims of aesthetics discourse which turned the 20th century against the notion of beauty in the arts, criticism, and philosophy, Hillman claims that we have thus repressed beauty in the world (and not violence, sexuality, childhood, feeling or spirit as we often suppose.) Hillman further cites a Fascist appropriation of the subject as it became neglected within the trajectory of humanistic and existential concern for democratic social improvement. Though beauty touches us more than anything, he points out it is likewise absent in the discourse of psychology and therapy. As we face ecological crisis, Hillman is concerned to recall beauty as that which alone can stir us to the depths needed to meet this crisis of survival. Echoing the thought of Buber and Morris in its implicit registering that vital culture hinges on the realm of eros, human longing, will and desire, Hillman deftly distils the crisis, and cure, of our culture around the loss of these energies:

> We want the world because it is beautiful, its sounds and smells and textures, the sensate presence of the world as body. In short, below the ecological crisis lies the deeper crisis of love, that our love has left the world. That the world is loveless results directly from the repression of beauty, its beauty and our sensitivity to beauty. For love to return to the world, beauty must first return, else we love the world only as a moral duty... (264)

Morris’s (1890 [2003]) words a century earlier ominously anticipate and echo this suggestion of loss of aesthetic sensitivity. He remarks on how the effects of capitalism act to make us unconsciously blunt the keenness of our senses, our visual sense especially, in face of what we see and experience, else those who notice the external forms of things...will go mad (273). His claim for the desired future was that once we
do away with work as slavery and recover social ethics and natural health, art and literature will occur in
their own fitting forms and will, as in the past, appeal directly to the senses, and in turn the senses will
grow again to their due and normal fullness and demand expression of the pleasure which their exercise
gives us... (Morris, 1890 [2003], 274). This suggests the high human cost of such a loss, in every sense.
Indeed, Hillman (1998) links beauty seamlessly to economy, noting the cost to physical well-being and
psychological balance, of ugliness in our urban, housing and work environments.

What does it cost in absenteeism; in sexual obsession, school drop-out rates, overeating
and short attention span; in pharmaceutical remedies and the gigantic escapism industries
of wasteful shopping, chemical dependency, sports violence, and the disguised colonialism
of tourism? (264)

Hillman extends his diagnosis to the prevalence of narcissism in our culture, suggesting that it is a
cultural, rather than personal disorder, also reflecting the repression of beauty. He demurs over the
definition of beauty, noting how we get lost in the subject/object dispute over its meaning. Rather he
suggests we recognize it as given, inherent in the world’s data, a display that evokes an aesthetic response,
revealed intensively in for instance, artworks. Hillman cites from mythology the goddess Aphrodite, who
made manifest the divine mind, to express this inherent radiance. This becomes clear, he notes, when we
consider the original Greek word kosmos, a term which blends the aesthetic and the moral, describing
...fitting order, right arrangement, so that attention to particulars takes precedent over universals. Further
it means ...becomingly, decently, honourably..., and referred to decoration, especially regarding women’s
dress and ornaments. Thus, Hillman cites a definition by Plotinus that an ugly thing is something that has
not been entirely mastered by pattern (268). This Aphroditic notion of beauty as sense perception raises
display to the primary mode of knowledge, Hillman notes, reflected as... the fittingness of each thing as
and where it is (269). Hillman opposes this to the “universal” idea of beauty where for instance, church art
symbolizes an abstract whole beyond itself. Animals are a potent example of this inherent concern with
their biologically aesthetic display of colours, feathers, fur, shells, as well as their dances and songs. We
see then that beauty is not an incidental, nor a special province of the arts or any other realm; it is beyond
subject-object dualism, beyond human comprehension.

Hillman is careful to note that it is not a matter of simply reversing this repression of beauty through the
ego, the same rational will that repressed it. He cites the principle of only likes can affect likes to explain
this. Thus first the ego must enter the conditions of beauty. This occurs through the sense of pleasure,
which is closely related. He finds this best conveyed in the work of George Santayana, where pleasure
subjectively is a psychological experience; pleasure objectively is what we call beauty (Hillman, 1998, citing Santayana, 270). We do not ‘see’ beauty as such then, but experience sensations such as delight and sensual joy; we are arrested by it with the gasp of breath when beauty seizes us. In short, the lifting of such a repression is equivalent to lifting the repression of Puritanism and its denial of pleasure. Hillman suggests other measures that can lift the repression of beauty, such as the courage to be afraid (of the power of beauty), the courage to abandon irony, to risk excess and intensity, and, in Hellenic terms, to remember the gods, that is, to anchor the mind in nonhuman values, whereby art finally reflects the sacred, and the doing of the work, ritual. We can also turn our attention towards things, thereby allowing what we turn toward to become beautiful, as the art world did in the early 20th century with all manner of disregarded objects and subjects in painting. We need above all, says Hillman, to let the heart be stirred (274).

I would add to Hillman’s (1998) valuable account that beauty is an unintended loss and casualty of a capitalist market economy. In short, beauty’s presence is not homologous with governing approaches to culture such as profit motivation, efficiency, overrationalism, which is another way of saying that beauty is indeed inseparable from moral concerns as reflected in the notion of kosmos. I would theorize that our compulsion to consume is a displacement of our frustrated instinct and need to live through and see reflected this inherent beauty of which Morris and Hillman remind us. We could say that the hunger for beautiful things is in truth the hungering for things to be beautiful. In the face of such thwarted creative energy, the ugliness (or lack of aesthetic) around us, and the associated dissatisfactions of our work life, we quell the agony with a ceaseless search to fill the void, having lost along the way even the sense of what is beautiful. Morris (1890 [2003]), writes, in demanding the extinction of luxury: What brings about luxury but a sickly discontent with the simple joys of the lovely earth? What is it but a warping of the natural beauty of things into a perverse ugliness to satisfy the jaded appetite of a man (sic) who is ceasing to be a man (sic) – a man (sic) who will not work, and cannot rest? (269). The work of consuming acts too, as a displacement for the energy, discernment and engagement we would ideally put into meaningful work. Consuming becomes a way we can ‘consume’ our energies and gain some satisfaction or release. Further, our socialized sense of entitlement conditions us to expect and demand low cost and even low-quality food and goods, even if these don’t in any way reflect the true cost of such goods or if their production causes suffering to others. Even if we are looking for things that are truly beautiful, we are unlikely to find them easily available in our culture of mass production, yet we have at times to purchase what is available to meet particular needs, whether it is a tool, clothing or a piece of furniture. Further insulting this instinct is that under a market economy, beauty sure enough exists, but as a last
consideration within a market economy as Hillman points out. Thus it falls to those who can afford it as a rarified commodity, rather than an inherent value of life for all. We see this reflected in the differential cost and quality of luxury or refined goods or even those essential things such as housing, furniture and clothing which at a certain level of quality, become inaccessible to many in an economy where cost bears no relation to any real human value. (A CBC news broadcast March 18, 2012 cites that in 1971, a house cost not much more than double the average annual income for a family, where in 2012, the ratio of the cost of a house to average income has increased many times that level.)

I think the periodicity that Appadurai (2008 [1996]) discusses as a component in consumption as reflected in, for instance, fashion or gift-giving at Christmas, is in an analogous way a displacement of temporal markers of our relation to the cosmos, for example the seasons and their co-relation to agricultural cycles, which have been lost (except within religious structures) and now abstracted and projected onto consumer time cycles. Thus, we are displaced from both instinctive making and the way that such making and use of materials are knit into a sacred, rhythmic sense of time. It makes sense then that we frequently buy these materials that once would have been made, such as Christmas and Halloween ‘decorations.’ Or else we recover these modalities at the private level as what we call ‘family traditions’ or such-like, but without necessarily any joining up with a larger sense of communal observance. (I think we often experience a sense of that larger participation via media transmission of public events). In short we have lost, I suggest, the aesthetic aspect of time as a progression and unfoldment of meaning in itself, in as much as it is appropriated by religious forms which in diverse ways, reflect back to us calendars of meaning as they shift through the year. We tend to overstep these formal rhythms of time (i.e. pattern in time) in favour of our own random impulse, and thereby lose the rich sense these markers offer of what I would call places in time. Put another way, as Highmore (2002) suggests our industrial work rhythms mark time, we have emptied time of creative content, losing the true and artful marking of time. This is all another way of saying too, that beauty, like all techniques of care, also takes time.

So, to situate Hillman’s (1998) description in a broader cultural critique here of culture and consumerism, it is not just a matter of reversing the repressed by whatever means, but of recovering the cultural conditions that give rise to beauty as a matter of course. This implies beauty not as anyway associated with a rarified demand or aesthetic fetishism but nothing more than the outcome of conditions that protect human health and well-being. Inversely, we can easily see the ‘creation’ of ugliness as materially reflecting the insensitivity and inhospitable conditions within ourselves that arise from destructive social conditions.
Lefebvre (1984) perfectly captures this pervasive absence in describing everyday life in capitalist modernity in 1967:

> With the Incas, the Aztecs, in Greece or in Rome, every detail (gestures, words, tools, utensils, costumes, etc.) bears the imprint of a style; nothing had as yet become prosaic, not even the quotidian; the prose and the poetry of life were still identical. Our own everyday life is typical for its yearning and quest for a style that obstinately eludes it...the prose of the world spread, until now it invades everything – literature, art and objects – and all the poetry of existence has been evicted. (29)

**The stripping of wisdom**

These losses as inflicted by a capitalist economy are then co-extensive with our construction as workers and consumers, and its many consequent social effects. We might describe these effects as being ‘stupefied’ in the sense of being stripped of wisdom, a dulling of the innate sensitivity that both Hillman and Morris lament above. I see this as the layered effects of several hegemonic forces: *being done to* (the utmost, expanded public or collective expression of Winnicott’s (2002) *being done to*) by the incessant bombardment of media and technology from infancy, undermining interiority, as well as critical and discriminatory processes; having our capacities, morale, and self-belief undermined by exhausting or meaningless work; having our material-making and physical instincts displaced by the addictive passivity-activity of inessential consuming (positioned as the compensation of that work), which is exhausting, yet not fulfilling; the sense of entitlement around having normalized access to and in effect, *consuming*, the large tracts of space that we have access to in North America, both public and private; and what often seems to accompany or condition all of these – accumulatively over generations the decrease of parental care and *confirming* experience in the interpersonal realm, as parents are too busy working in order to survive and to sustain consuming, leaving the young with a deep emotional deficit and poor brain development (Mate, 2010). I believe these effects reinforce each other to induce such a stupefied state as a coping, deflecting behaviour that when examined seems, after all, near the threshold of desperation, a kind of performance by action or omission, that is a cry for help. In literature, in story, the idiot can often be identified with wisdom and I wonder if our conditioned stupidity is a cry of humiliation at the lack or loss of wisdom, of which we feel cheated, yet ultimately, humanly culpable. We have somehow, unbeknownst to ourselves, traded wisdom, beauty, and means of self-sustenance for lesser versions, for shoddier goods. It seems as if such behaviour has become almost normalized in North American culture. I believe all these
effects pain us so because they are a severing from the rhythm and sense of proportion which are respectively, the temporal and spatial analogues of pattern, the rhythm innate to creativity, which is our birthright and which ideally is enacted in our bodies, our homes, our work, community and cosmos.

In sum, we live in a culture of excess and boundarylessness psychically, and likewise reflected materially, with many of our environments, the objects in them and their spatial arrangements disembodied from the essential communally-grounded life functions and aesthetics which they would once have reflected: preparing food, eating, sleeping, reflecting, conversing, warming by a fireplace near at hand in small, intimate spaces. Rather our spaces and their contents are often scaled to a disproportion with such intimacy and interiority, not interrelational but each thing of a piece and mirroring not the body or soul, but a commercial, externally-derived image of what is desirable or ‘beautiful’. Just as we know how contained and nurtured we feel in beautiful buildings and aesthetic environments, it does not take much imagination to know how ugly, utilitarian environments and the absence of human creativity and engagement they represent, might affect us. Walter (1988) writes that ...rationally planned space, exclusively intent on providing a machine for living, may nourish unintended feelings, notably boredom, malaise, and violence (143). It is easy to see further how such conditions merge with a mindless consuming and a consuming mindlessness. We can link these concerns likewise to Williams’ (1961) observations decades ago on the impacts of popular culture – now so much literal extensions of our environments – and his cautionary query, Clearly there is something in the psychology of print and image that none of us has yet quite grasped (13). As Morris (1890 [2003]) intuited a century ago in observing the need to blunt our senses against ugliness, ...this of course means that people will gradually get to be born without this inconvenient sensibility (273). Such a loss of sensitivity would pertain both inwardly as much as outwards to the world. This would seem almost a necessary condition for the hegemony of capitalist culture to prevail over time.

**Redeeming Consumption and Creativity**

If we accept the above theories and concerns regarding consumption as part of the damaging pattern of our notions of work and economy, it is clear that we need to make radical change in these patterns in western culture. Can we redeem consumption from within and from below even as we seek to find ways to entirely transform our notions of work and economy? We are free, to a large degree, to choose how we consume, if not always what we consume. We can reorient our consuming to seeking for the things we need to be beautiful and locally and ethically-sourced when possible. We can bring a sense of care, mission and
seeking as well as social communion, and periodicity, to what and how we consume. We can reconceive shopping or looking as a form of pleasure and contemplation. Meandering in and out of small shops, markets, cafes, secondhand shops – on foot – in downtown streets, is a pleasure in dramatic contrast to the disorientation and exhaustion of giant box stores in unidentifiable places, surrounded by their seas of parking lots, supporting owners who have no continuous relation to us as customers, no special sense of service to the citizen-consumer and whose goods offer no traceable links between what we are buying and where or how they were produced. Redeeming consumption begins with examining personally how we are constructed as consumers through media and our environment and socialization, how we are progressively pacified and stupefied through this process, unless countervailing forces are at work either in our nature or our family, community or education. We can then take responsibility for critiquing and deconstructing ourselves away from this position, transforming ourselves into rather citizens, or members of a community. This becomes an act of self-education and ideally public education as well.

We can also deconstruct and transform our positioning as consumers by reengaging with the many realms which the mode of consumption has usurped, that is, where we have handed over to it our responsibility for engagement with that realm of life; these encompass food, health, attitudes to sexuality and fertility, leisure and entertainment, nature and place, art and creativity. Following the logic of effects, we can see how overall our pattern of consumption appropriates, for instance, our intrinsic human creativity through several related, circular effects: instead of using our time to create things (whether aesthetic or functional, rejecting that false division) we use it to consume, whether either goods or leisure-entertainment or media, as part of our hegemonic conditioning to be passive in this way; we buy many things we would once have made, continually reproducing the false divide between beauty and function/art and creativity because our notion of ‘artistic’ becomes distorted to describe specialist art production, stripped of its intrinsic social purpose, and banalized as decorative; the pattern of industrial time intrinsic to our work model precisely pre-empts the time needed to make things or to learn how to make things and to pass this knowledge on to our children; the pattern of consuming has caused over many decades the atrophy if not outright loss of these skills themselves; the techniques of consuming and of work, materially and spatially, disconnect us from the bodily rhythms and embodiment that are innate to creativity and communal life; the overall effect of capitalist and globalized hegemony pre-empts any social or material context that would encourage or enable the active valuing of making and creating; through all of the above effects, our pattern of consumption has both displaced our instinct for beauty and activity as outlined above, and, through conditioned passivity, has siphoned off our agency and the volition required, as well as the time required to reflect, in order to alter this state of affairs (Hillman, 1998; Morris, 1890 [2003]). A change would
literally have to be reproduced from below within diverse and many communities, or at the municipal level by a concerted effort on the part of many individuals (Bookchin, 1992, 1995, 2007). A new pattern would have to be entirely rewoven, with likely much more difficulty than the way it was unravelled piece by piece through all linked dimensions of life.

There are, needless to say, countless individuals and social movements who live differently or are attempting to alter conditions at least within their own subcultures and have inherited those skills from their milieu. But this cannot blind us to taking stock, unflinchingly, of the overall pattern of deformation we have built up to become normality and which still prevails. We continue to be predominantly a society of consumers, conditioned by both definition and design to be passive and apolitical. Creation, beauty and care are logically and indivisibly bound: we care about what we create, about that with which we are connected, about that which means to us, and in which we share responsibility and participation. Shoddy goods from who and where we know not what, buildings, homes, places and things made without thought or beauty, can only erode our capacity and motivation for care, and so the vicious circle goes on. When we deconstruct in this way the chain of consequences for human creativity, the link between passivity and capitalist hegemony becomes clear. Making things and knowing how to make them, from food to furniture, health to houses, is a function of basic human sustenance and care; it ramifies in the larger process of communal self-care. Of all that we have handed over, it is this most fundamental power and capacity of self-care that we have most tragically emptied ourselves of: knowledge of food production and care of land, and the human well-being that is wholly interrelated to these. Thus we are talking of the very root of culture, or what we now call the economy.

How can we respond to this chain of effects? This is where, from our diverse situations, we can become the agents of change. Adkin (1998), citing Haraway (2004) and others, notes the importance for our utopian yearnings, of discourse in which we collectively build theories of experiences which are spatially, temporally and culturally located, as opposed to either totalizing, universal theory or deconstructivist relativism. Adkin (1998) is referring to the limitations and blind spots of, for instance, any white middle class ecological movements as were arising in the 80s and 90s. Our cultural habits of work are deeply ingrained, and workers’ opposition to ecological discourse that would take away jobs can fail to address the factor of bourgeois ideology in which consumption equals happiness. Rather than approaches of asceticism or deprivation, Adkin is concerned to show that to construct a collective social movement and counter-hegemonic ecological discourse, we need to link discursively the kinds of needs which many
subjects are expressing (both egalitarian and pluralist) to arguments about the conditions for happiness and to concrete proposals for change (Adkin, 1998, 307).

The reflections in Part Three can contribute to such a discourse. If we consider how our model of work and our unmet needs for beauty condition our consumption practices, we can revision these practices even as we begin to transform our meanings and organization of work. We cannot achieve this without confronting the constructed notion of economy upon which all of these effects are founded, and where we can begin to register (even if it remains largely invisible) the loss and damage inflicted on humans by a capitalist market economy.

CONFRONTING THE TOTAL ECONOMY

How shall we interpret the responsibility of those who deal with living systems?

(Gregory Bateson, 1987, 182)

With such an arresting and highly fitting question, Bateson (1987) ruptures our rationalistic train of thought, while reminding us that acting from a holistic perspective demands a new discipline still to be defined. He goes on to ask, what sort of a thing is man (sic) that he may know and act on living systems, and what sort of things are such systems that they may be known? (182) He suggests that the answers to these riddles must be woven from mathematics and natural history and aesthetics and the joy of life and loving... (182). He cites the shared responsibility of our mythmakers – including the scientists, politicians, and teachers – in shaping these future myths in which we will become embedded.

I cannot analyze here how our notion of economy emerged historically, but logic asserts that it is what happens by default when we do not intervene in the forces of domination and technological development as they work together through history. These forces, still unchecked, proceed to hold sway now through the hegemony of consumption and economic globalization, which we deem so natural and inevitable, though devoid of any ethical ground or dimension. The techniques of consuming have so stripped us of innate boundary and measure that by extension they seem to pre-empt our questioning of it. As Morris (1890 [2003]) stated in his 1884 lecture Art and Socialism, lamenting that the gains we have made in the last few centuries have been at too high a cost – the loss of pleasure in daily work and the death of Art – ...it is more grievous still to be unconscious of the loss; or being dimly conscious of it to have to force ourselves to forget it and to cry out that all is well (258). What needs to happen for us to register such loss?
The words of Wendell Berry (2002), from his cogent and ongoing critique of our prevailing market economy, encompass such understanding:

There is no plainer symptom of our insanity than our avowed intention to maintain by fire an unlimited economic growth. Fire destroys what nourishes it and so in fact imposes severe limits on any growth associated with it. The true source and analogue of our economic life is the economy of plants, which never exceeds natural limits, never grows beyond the power of its place to support it, produces no waste, and enriches and preserves itself by death and decay. We must learn to grow like a tree, not like a fire. We must repudiate...the idiotic ideology of unlimited economic growth that pushes blindly toward the limitation of massive catastrophe. (201)

Berry, the American poet, writer, essayist, farmer, and prolific activist over many decades, ultimately restores the notion of economy to the larger human and spiritual terms from which it has become grossly abstracted during modernity. His language is poetic, yet fiercely exact and unflinching. Through it, as with Buber, we are able to see how a spiritual perspective is indivisible from practical life. Within his own religious framework he calls it the Kingdom of God, making the point precisely that, whatever we call it, in the end it cannot be defined without recourse to a religious tradition. However we take it apart, we see that our active notion of economy does not comprehend everything; it leaves too much out. The logic then is that it opposes the Kingdom of God, where everything and everyone is included, all things are understood to be connected, and which ultimately we cannot comprehend or control. In this writing, Berry settles on the culturally neutral term of the Great Economy and stresses how it is beyond our human accounting.

The Great Economy, like the Tao or the Kingdom of God, is both known and unknown, visible and invisible, comprehensible and mysterious. It is, thus, the ultimate condition of our experience and of the practical questions rising from our experience, and it imposes on our consideration of those questions an extremity of seriousness and an extremity of humility. (220)

Thus for Berry, it is a description of the circumstance of religion, precisely the circumstance that causes religion (221).

We thus need a small human economy that fits harmoniously within this Great Economy. We cannot, for instance, steal resources from the future, which goes against the patterns in nature. A good human
economy *defines and values human goods* and conserves and protects them; it *proposes to endure* (Berry, 2002, 224). Making an analogy to the story of the *Goose with the Golden Egg*, Berry observes crucially that we as humans cannot create value, which originates only in the Great Economy. We can only add value. As a fundamental example, Berry lauds the gift of topsoil, which we cannot create or truly describe in scientific terms, but which makes life out of death in a way we would once have called miraculous. Likewise there is the phenomenon of how diversity increases capacity, *complications of form or pattern can increase greatly within quantitative limits* (225). That is, nature enriches itself *within* its own limits by diversification. Limits and restraint are intrinsic within the Great Economy, the knowing of what not to do and when to stop; these Berry sees as practical reflections of the idea of the Sabbath. As opposed to these principles, we have presumed to originate value with our money system, which is necessarily abstract and false, and dependent upon inflation and usury with its implicit destructive consequences reflecting the principle of *hubris*. Money value can only be true as it *justly and stably represents the value of the necessary goods, such as clothing, food, and shelter, which originate ultimately in the Great Economy* (225).

Berry (2002) posits the countervailing idea of agrarian thought and practice as an alternative to our industrial and knowledge economy, bringing to light its destructive effects for humans and for the earth, such as our dependence on fossil fuels, treating topsoil as a fund to be mined, and the approaches of agribusiness promoters, who he calls *the pornographers of farming* (ix). He defines agrarianism as a land-based economy, locally-oriented and focused around intimate experience and knowledge of particulars – plants, animals, soils and watershed – and around very particular local histories and biographies. Such an agrarian mind is intensely opposed to hearing of people, creatures and places conceived of as labour, capital and raw material. It is deeply concerned with good work and practice over quantity. Agrarianism cannot be abstracted as it has to be practiced in order to even exist. Berry emphasizes that agrarianism is a culture as much as an economy; it truly reconciles the inseparable nature and culture. Furthermore, it is a subsistence economy before it is a market economy. Such a subsistence economy is highly diversified and has characteristically involved hunting and gathering as well as farming and gardening, all activities that bind people to their landscape. The industrial economy, on the other hand, alienates people from their landscape by breaking these ties and introducing distant dependencies. Berry sees this settled connection as not just between farmers and their farms, but extending to a revisioning of the city as connected to its rural landscapes and watersheds. The good caretaking of land is passed down to children; the coherence of families and communities is preserved. The other tenet of this thought is that political democracy is founded upon economic democracy that allows a significant measure of economic self-determination. For
Berry, the agrarian mind is at bottom, a religious mind, with reverence for Creation (Berry, 2002, 240). Berry is keen to clarify that his vision cannot be dismissed as turning back the clock: on the contrary, such a stable, sustainable system of land-based economies has not yet existed, apart from limited, threatened examples. This is still ahead of us. He emphasizes that he is not saying that everyone should be a farmer, but that we all share agrarian responsibilities, that eating is an agricultural act (321). The globalized economy on the other hand, now institutionalized and overseen by the World Trade Organization (without election anywhere) is like a total government in Berry’s view, (257) which institutionalizes global ignorance, in which producers and consumers cannot know or care about each other, and in which the histories of all products will be lost. In such a circumstance, the degradation of products and places, producers and consumers, is inevitable. But in a sound local economy, in which producers and consumers are neighbours, nature will become the standard of work and production. Consumers who understand their economy will not tolerate the destruction of the local soil or ecosystem or watershed as a cost of production. Only a healthy local economy can keep nature and work together in the consciousness of the community. Only such a community can restore history to economics. (244)

Berry’s (2002) countervailing idea is clearly contoured. Any manufacturing is locally owned, employs local people, and is formed and scaled to the landscape. Owners live with the results of their decisions. Both importing and exporting are subject to the priorities of local production and need. Berry is realistic enough to know that it takes great hope to sustain such a vision, dismissed by so many as hopeless. Rather his agrarian principles implicitly propose the revolts of local producers and consumers against the global corporate presence. Writing in 1999, he sees these revolts happening around him, as larger-scale industrial abuses, such as treatment of animals, industrial farming and food processing practices become harder to disguise from consumers. Though we had long ago lost conservation as an integral part of both production and consumption, we must, seeing these harmful practices, overcome this passivity as consumers and begin to act and choose and, in the process, renew the categories of producer and consumer to become citizen or community member. This amounts to an economic revolt.

In view of the oversimplification that has both caused our environmental crisis and which also seems to characterize our responses to it – thinking that a change in values, a spiritual awakening, or merely political solutions will solve our problems – Berry is adamant that we recognize the need to alter actual practices by recovering responsibility for those areas of life where we have thoughtlessly given proxies to
corporations to produce all of our food, clothing and shelter. He is concerned at our own complicity in the behaviour of corporations. Such oligarchic forms of economy operate by deferring goods from the present to the future, justifying violent means by good ends. He points out what should surely be obvious to us by now: that such an economy manages to disguise its destructive outcome solely by means of an artificial economy which ultimately symbolizes only itself. And so, as Berry (2002) puts it, we can proclaim unprecedented “prosperity” and “economic growth” in a land of degraded farms, forests, ecosystems, and watersheds, polluted air, failing families, and perishing communities (252). Such a ‘free market,’ based on the principle of goods being produced wherever it is cheapest, and consumed wherever they bring the highest price, destroys local production capacities, local diversity and economic independence and yet is the ‘ruling orthodoxy of the age.’ All of this is enabled by our idea that a corporation be regarded legally as a person. Berry attempts to show the irrefutable error of this global ‘free market’ economy by listing the assumptions that seem baldly implicit in this conception which we grant corporations. For Berry, these assumptions clearly prefigure a condition of total economy, that is one in which everything, including ‘life forms’ and the ‘right to pollute,’ is ‘private property’ and is valued for sale. State and national governments then in effect become agents of this global economy, through signing over significant powers and also because democratic/political processes are too slow to react to our unrestrained economic and technological developments. Meanwhile, the total economy destroys the real wealth of the world. Likewise, Peter Victor (Dearing, 2010), an eco-economist at York University, advocates that economy must be embedded as a subsystem of the biosphere, not free-standing as we treat it. He asserts that in order to begin reversing the production of poverty, it is our own rich societies that should go first in questioning the ethic of growth. Victor reminds us that only ten generations in human history have experienced economic growth. Before this we knew only the use of wood and coal; then in rapid succession came oil, natural gas, and electricity.

Berry (2002) asserts that with the default of government protections against this total economy, we must protect ourselves against loss of both economic security and freedom. Whether believable in this context or not, Berry cites the principle that …powers not exercised by government return to the people (258). The only way he sees to do this is putting the idea of a local economy into practice as he sees happening with the increasing actions towards a local food economy. (A decade later we can see this borne out in many areas of the world, including here in southern Ontario.) This way we make the total economy less total. Thus we see attempts to shorten the distance between food producers and consumers, and increase connections between them, for instance linking city consumers to their local farms, along with increasing practice of organic approaches to food production and animal husbandry. Berry sees a logic leading from
Berry (2002) returns to the notion of human economy such uncharacteristic (for our time) aspects as honesty and the affections as fundamental economic virtues that are flagrantly excluded by competition. He describes pleasure as affection in action, all highly pertinent to our life of work and for our care of others, from infants to aged parents. Keenly aware of the risks in talking about economy this way, he persists (echoing Morris): *But these risks seem to me worth taking, for what I am trying to deal with here is the grief that we increasingly suffer as a result of the loss of these pleasures* (213). Indeed, Berry emphasizes as constituent of our human economy the practice of the human virtues, but stressing the paradox that these are invisible, not abstracted and preached as they have become in our culture, not the *coldhearted charity of the “general good,”* but dissolved in the particularities and practices that embody them – good work, good farming, good parenthood, good homemaking, and so on. As he puts it, *Temperance has no appearance or action of its own, nor does justice, prudence, fortitude, faith, hope, or charity.* He continues, citing William Blake, *“He who would do good to another, must do it in Minute Particulars.”* Bound in with these notions is that within the Great Economy, there is no escape into specialization or observation, no false division between the arts and sciences. We are all inside it; there is no outside (234).

Thus, we see the whole pattern that leads from economy to religion, health, and on to art and beauty, particularly as Berry begins to speak from his Christian perspective of the survival of Creation, and the way even many Christians seem happily complicit with the destruction of the natural world. Yet for Berry, such destruction of nature, or *stupid economics,* are understood to be a *murder of Creation* (309). This division between religion and economy, and their reflections in character and culture, are untenable to Berry. He asks, *what sort of economy would be responsible to the holiness of life* (309)? (in much the same way that Bateson (1987) asks, *How shall we interpret the responsibility of those who deal with living systems* (182)?) This ties seamlessly to the issue of quality of work.

> Good work uses no thing without respect, both for what it is in itself and for its origin. It uses neither tool nor material that it does not respect and that it does not love... To work without pleasure or affection, to make a product that is not both useful and beautiful, is to dishonour God, nature, the thing that is made, and whomever it is made for. This is blasphemy: to make shoddy work of the work of God. (312)
In this passage we hear echoed the words of William Morris, expressing from a religious perspective what Morris asserts from a secular one. In the same moment we are speaking of work, art, beauty. Berry (2002) reminds us, like Williams and Morris, that art means the ways humans make what they need.

If we understand that no artist – no maker – can work except by reworking the works of Creation, then we see that by our work we reveal what we think of the works of God. How we take our lives from this world, how we work, what work we do, how well we use the materials we use, and what we do with them after we have used them – all these are questions of the highest and gravest religious significance. In answering them, we practice, or do not practice, our religion. (315)

All of us then are artists and makers of our lives, of the things we need, so that our divisions of arts from craftsmanship from labour are meaningless and destructive. Berry points out that the great artistic traditions have never been divorced from religion or economy, nor had anything to do with self-expression, or cults of originality and genius, but rather that the arts traditionally belong to the neighbourhood. They are the means by which the neighbourhood lives, works, remembers, worships, and enjoys itself (317). This resonates with Morris’s (1890[2003]) hopes for our recovered sensibilities to manifest in art that is sensuous and human (274). Likewise, it recalls Williams’ (1961) account of creativity in culture: As we grasp the relation between meanings arrived at by creative interpretation and description, and meanings embodied by conventions and institutions, we can then reconcile meanings of culture as creative activity and as a whole way of life.... (40).

Berry himself, writing in 1991, acknowledges frankly his view, based on experience, that there is no use in appealing to this economy for mercy toward the earth or toward any human community. He believes we need to oppose it by a kind of quiet secession, whereby we remove ourselves from such a total economy as depicted here, by supporting local economic democracy through our consumer and job practices, and enabling ordinary citizens to own a small, usable share of the country (2002, 204).

**Food, our first work**

*Eating is an agricultural act.* (Berry, 2002, 321)

*Viewing the world’s food supply as a repertoire of patentable genes to profit corporations at the expense of communities worldwide is possibly the greatest threat to our collective future...* (Fischlin & Nandorfy, 2012, 180)
Clearly, to talk about community, about work and economy, particularly through the work of Wendell Berry, leads us directly to food. This is fitting as our relationship to food has been extensively shaped by the hegemonic influences discussed throughout this paper. Food remains our first and only really necessary work, remaining the prototype of all work definitions. Perhaps in many ways we need culturally to start again there and work outwards. This brief discussion marks food as the true human work and economy, the heart of community and culture, and the area where our survival and cultural well-being may be most at stake. Here we see both some of the most insidious effects of hegemony, as well as promising ways forward over the last decade in the form of emerging movements for sustainable agriculture and local food systems (e.g. http://www.farmstart.ca/; http://foodsecurecanada.org/; http://www.guelphwellingtonlocalfood.ca/; http://www.toronto.ca/health/tfpc/).

Regarding hegemonic influences, the world food economy is a powerful example of where we see science, media and even universities converge in representing vested corporate interests in technological and agricultural developments since the mid-90s in the field of biotechnology. This is most predominant in the area of genetically modified foods. This science involves taking genes from unrelated species and inserting them into another to forge a plant that would not occur in nature. Corn and soy have been the main GM crops and their products appear in countless processed foods. Democratic processes of consultation and independent scientific testing have been entirely absent from the proliferation of these technologies, communication of the issues has been inadequate, and only a few countries, mainly in the UK and Europe, have seen consumers actively protesting GM foods and demanding measures such as labelling. Nearly two decades after their appearance, there is still little awareness of GM food in Canada, no labelling of any kind, and little consumer response, though we have no facts about their effects on the human organism. This silence is all the more startling in view of the fact that it is well-known that leading corporate producers of these technologies have routinely for many years coerced farmers into purchasing and using their seeds. Further, their known practice is to harass and fine any organic farmers whose crops happen to turn up (wind-blown) GM seed in their fields. The Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser has been the most documented case of this in Canada (Percy Schmeiser). The technology has been tweaked over time, but the constant feature (under the guise of ‘feeding the world’) is the creation of seed as commodity whereby the farmer is not allowed to save and re-use the seeds, but must purchase new ones each season under a Technology Use Agreement. The ultimate version of this in the early 2000s was a sterile seed called Terminator, dubbed ‘suicide seeds’, because they would cease producing after one season (Genetic). It is hard to imagine a product and an ethos more opposed to creation, community, and
its connections to food subsistence, sovereignty and security across the globe, than the patenting of life practised by these corporations.

Fischlin and Nandorfy (2012) note that as of 2010, ten companies own the proprietary seeds to approximately two-thirds of the world’s major crops, with Monsanto now the largest supplier of vegetable seeds and the world’s largest biotech company. They comment: *Beyond the legal issues of this monopoly are profound ethical and rights issues having to do with stewardship of plant culture that is the result of millennia of development* (183). Documentaries over the last decade, some shown on public television, do publicize the effectively criminal ‘policing’ of farmers by corporations such as Monsanto, and highlight the way that many heads of state in the U.S. work for these corporations and are effectively buying government policy on these matters (Food, Inc.). The duplicit nature of this regime is exemplified in a May 2011 article in Grist, which notes that President Barack Obama honoured Wendell Berry in 2011 with the National Humanities Award in 2011, while two days later, the USDA chief was addressing the annual conference of the agribusiness-funded corn and soy growers (the main GM crops) (Grist). These companies proceed to peddle their wares across the globe except where hard fought for bans have been set in places such as India. News of tragic outcomes over the last decade, such as firing of whistleblowers who challenge these corporations, come and go fleetingly and insensibly across our media screens, if they do reach them at all. Two horrifying examples are those of the estimated 200,000 Indian farmers who have committed suicide over failed GM crops or bankruptcy by their contracts with ‘life science’ corporations; and the import of cheap GM corn into Mexico which decimated the local cultivation of this crop sacred to the indigenous population (Fischlin & Nandorfy, 2012, 173/233). Bio-piracy practices see the patenting of the healing property of healing plants work to *divest communities of their own commons and steal traditional knowledge for economic profit*. Fischlin and Nandorfy (2012) link this bio-piracy to the history of European colonization (185, 187).

Friedmann (1998) sheds light on how the current world food economy emerged after WWII. The World Food Board was proposed in 1947, building on the international institutions inherited from the Depression and WWII. However this was caught in the contradictions of its time and the proposal was defeated by default. A nationally-regulated, surplus-driven Fordist food regime emerged, with its golden age in the 50s and 60s. The U.S. amended GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) to exclude agricultural products; it controlled imports and distributed surplus through food aid. This set the stage for the production and management of world trade, and was replicated by other countries: in Europe, with the Common Agricultural Policy, in Japan, with Marshall Aid. The Third World then extended and adapted
controls to complement this. After prolonged and acrimonious negotiations in the Paraguay round, GATT was undone at the insistence of the U.S. (in late 90s), now updated to become the World Trade Organization (WTO).

What began in the 60s with food aid and rising standards of diet, ended in the 80s and onward with trade wars and growing hunger. Two major shifts in consumption occurred over this period. First was the growing emphasis on beef in the American model, based on higher incomes and European heritage. This set the incentive for industrial livestock production and the crops to feed them. Secondly, food became a consumer good, with the likes of corporations such as Kraft, Nestle, and Unilever, and the emergence of processed and frozen foods, incorporating European sweeteners and fats. This led to the concentration of wholesaling and retailing and the dominance of retail chains especially in North America. Production thus became specialized into grains and intensive livestock operations. Such a monoculture created grave ecological consequences. With the shift from human to animal grains came an increase in maize, and the introduction of soy. Transnational feed manufacturers became the link between these and the now intensive poultry, pig and cattle operations. Many farms became suppliers of raw materials for this industrial food manufacturing, replacing crops brought to markets and increasing the use of mechanical input and hybrid seeds. These developments affected the replacement of traditional knowledge. In terms of international trade, tropical exports were disadvantaged due to substitutions by First World crops & synthetics (soya oil, sweeteners made from corn and chemicals replacing respectively, tropical oils and cane sugar). For bananas and other crops not easily substituted, transnational corporations encouraged plantations to give way to smaller farms dependent on sales to export companies, often subject to production contracts. As a sector, Fordist agriculture by virtue of its agricultural programmes tended to the model of small and family farms, but they then also encouraged growth through increased chemical and mechanical input. Thus farmers increasingly became locked into state commodity programmes, monocultures and credit. Agrofood corporations had outgrown the nationally regulated regimes which had spawned them. Politically, the number of farms declined, and were subordinated within the agrofood complex.

The 80s saw international restructuring mainly to the liberal-productivist model, but parallel to this grew ecological alternatives. Simultaneously, new consumption levels fostered demand for old craft foods and regional dishes, so niche capitalist regional markets accompanied the globalization of markets. There was standardization of both expensive and mass consumption with for example, boxed meats, arising from global centralization of the livestock complex as organized along new axes of trade, creating the ‘world
steer’ (like the world car.) In Mexico, this displaced local markets and sideline production of cows. Further trends saw exotic fruits from Third World countries for privileged consumption; they were pressured by the IMF to supply foreign markets. In terms of production, the liberal-productivist model and biotechnology threatened to compound the negative effects of the old chemical and mechanical technologies. In addition, there was the consolidation of farms through corporate domination and agricultural lobbies, as discussed above. This reflected a shift towards private power over public responsibility. At the same time, the transition from mass to batch production meant a shift in labour forces, away from male farmers and industrial workers, towards women and minorities, accompanied by the attack on unionized labour.

Friedmann (1998) goes on to cite the ways we can support alternatives to this model. As consumers we can choose to buy local and, I would add, avoid genetically modified foods; we can support renewed employment in labour intensive, sustainable agriculture and the manufacture and sales of seasonal foods; as citizens we can promote policies to support transition to sustainable agriculture; we can trade with parallel groups in other countries, bypassing corporate channels, thus promoting the same changes in the Third World; we can have an effect on the demand that plays its part in coercing the Third World, by focussing on our regional food economies. It is also crucial that we support genetic diversity of our crops. The liberal-productivist model and GMO crops have a serious impact on this question of biodiversity, as discussed above. What are the elements of a sustainable food regime? With the demographic shift to urban populations and post-Fordist niche consumer markets, unemployment and food insecurity, we can choose (instead of charities institutionalized in symbiosis with private enterprises of the liberal-productivist model) self-help organizations combining negotiated involvement with community work schemes; farmers can choose to work between the two models (which may be complementary in the short term). Adapting to the market, they have to in practice grow what Cargill or Mitsubishi want them to grow, while also or alternatively choosing alternatives based on negotiated involvement with consumers, retailers, input suppliers and governments (95-96).

In terms of government support, food policy councils have been emerging at municipal levels, fostering an alternative vision of food as a fundamental right, part of the health and livelihood of individuals and communities. These groups aim for a local food economy with socially determined land use, joining with anti-poverty, employment and public, preventative health agendas. These developments encompass CSAs, urban gardening, and linking of farmers and chefs. Friedmann points out that the shift to liberal-productivist model leads to both wider markets and breakup into niche markets, though some of course are
accessible only to higher incomes. Public purchases and creative public food programmes have great
effect. We need to lobby the municipal, provincial and even federal governments. Making use of health
and environmental criteria (eg. requiring low chemical inputs and high standards of freshness) can help in
this regard because it is easily justified for hospitals, schools and seniors. Ideally such programs integrate
nutrition education, health, gardening, cultural diversity, and revaluation of women’s work. Local
initiatives need support from national government in the form of protection against international rules
prohibiting local preferences. Potential trade agreements like CETA (see below) could threaten this.
Government-funded institutions could do research and development in new technologies and promote
rural enterprises. At the national and international levels, we need green policies to promote new types of
employment, shorter work hours, and recognition for unpaid labour supporting families and communities.
These social, ecological alternatives also support the same in the Third World, enabling recognition of
indigenous and women’s knowledge. Science could build on site-specific knowledge and experience.
With the locus of action now polarized between transnational corporations on one side and consumers,
farmers, and communities on the other, the waning power of the nation state is all that stands between
them.

Evan Fraser (Dearing, 2010), author of *Empires of Food: Feast, Famine, and the Rise and Fall of
Civilizations*, states that our three mistakes, both in past historical crises and now, are: highly specialized
erosion-prone landscapes such as wheat crops, compounded now by genetically modified monoculture;
the creation of a poor and marginalized underclass with our practices; and dependence on the incidence of
good weather that allowed us to get away with the first two mistakes. Likewise, in response to looming
food crises, Fraser cites the need for smart science, informed policy and the engaging of
citizen/consumers; the need to make agriculture in Africa and Asia productive by working in a
participatory way with farmers (for instance, a project which created seed storage bags that increased
productivity by twenty percent); relatively small-scale producers; prices based on true cost of production
(as opposed to Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* which sold us the idea of cheap things, which in truth
externalize costs such as polluted rivers or exploited workers); initiatives such as Fair Trade and the
Organic Soil Association (though both, he claims, are problematic); local food systems alongside and
complementing the global one (Ontario Greenbelt policy has been problematic); the re-learning of the art
of food storage to cover shortages; measures such as taxing farmers in good years (he cites the Pharaoh
story from the Bible); and crucially, the need to develop a food culture that is consumer and grass-roots
driven, such as we see happening. In this regard, Fraser suggests that corporations and government will
ultimately end up listening to and reflecting citizens. He points out that only one or two percent of our population is in farming.

The combined factors of absence of democratic engagement in agricultural approaches, with a passive consuming culture focussed on expectation of ready access to cheap food, exert a powerful hegemony for the aims of these corporations advancing their biotechnological agendas. Yet this is also the area where we can affect the most direct influence as consumers and citizens, by educating ourselves, by demanding unadulterated foods and by purchasing foods produced by organic and local sources. The self-protective movements articulated by Berry would seem a fitting response to support these movements in the direction of a sustainable food economy. Failing this, we are simply done-to.

**Sustainable Trade**

Our trade practices, agricultural and other, and now occurring at a global scale, deeply reflect and shape our experience of human community. From an ecological perspective, it is essential that we consider how our trade policies and practices affect sustainability, which is always dependent on how we define ‘sustainable.’ In general, the more ecological and social factors are incorporated in the definition of sustainability, the more negative are trade’s perceived effects (Perkins, 1998). Much radical social and ecological thought is inherently antithetical to trade, for reasons such as the damage it causes to communities or bioregions by devaluing of the local, fostering external dependence, and exacerbating forms of social domination. Further, trade makes it difficult to see the limits of the local ecosystem and thus to know and feel when ecological boundaries are being trespassed. Thus, Perkins points out, it complicates consensus on needed steps in the direction of sustainability. Our entrenched consumer mentality exacerbates these effects of a sense of boundless resources and rights to them. Many argue that the basic economic trade theory of comparative advantage cannot pertain in a world where capital is free to roam the globe in search of the lowest costs of production. Thus we need protectionism to prevent the rampant lowering of environmental and labour standards, unequal income distribution and unlimited economical growth. Trade and environmental policies would ideally be mutually supportive.

Berry (2002) asserts that a local economy rests on the two principles of neighbourhood and subsistence. In the practice of neighbourhood, neighbours ask themselves what they can do or provide for one another. Under the principle of subsistence, a community protects its own production capacities, neither importing products that it can produce for itself nor exporting local products except as surplus after local needs have been met. Ethically, a viable community cannot produce solely for export, nor import goods produced at
the cost of human or ecological degradation elsewhere. This should of course apply to regions and nations as well as localities. Berry stresses that such an approach is not isolationism. He acknowledges that not everything can be produced locally, and stresses that charity at home always implies the principle of charity abroad. The principle of subsistence in fact is the best guarantee, Berry claims, of marketable surpluses.

Perkins (1998) raises key questions on whether sustainable trade is conceivable within self-sufficient communities or bioregions, and what it is about trade that seems to lead to exploitation of the trading relationship and to inequality. The explanation would seem to be that global expansion of trade has been parallel with social transformations such as technological development and increasing commoditization of land, labour, natural resources and capital. Trade itself can be conceived as contributing to the dissemination of beauty, diversity and even world understanding without threatening sustainability (56).

Key criteria would need to be drawn to define and ensure the beneficial effects of trade, as occurring within measurable limits, involving no coercion, and based on an agreed definition of sustainability. The level of human rights enjoyed by all trading partners would be a key consideration, along with a necessary restructuring of international financial obligations and relationships to eliminate debts and associated coercion. These factors would encompass a recasting of the idea of comparative advantage. A vital measure of sustainable trade would be its effect on local communities and mechanisms for communities to opt out of wider trade relationships. Public education is also needed on the effects of globalization. Clearly the criteria of many of these sustainability targets imply government action, whereas principles of free trade are intrinsically opposed to that. But along with calling on governments, Perkins, echoing Bookchin (1992[1995], 1995), cites that participation in local communities and fostering local economy is vital for setting and enforcing sustainability goals, including human rights and equity, resource use, waste disposal and environmental services. Perkins acknowledges that current liberalizing agreements such as NAFTA and GATT work against these aims and do not give cause for optimism. Further, we now face the prospect of the new aptly-named Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which could specifically undermine the prospects mentioned above for the effects of trade on communities (Barlow, 2010; Canada; Comprehensive). Potential implications for agriculture could see European agribusiness companies having the right to further erode farmer rights to save, exchange and sell seeds from their crops. In the area of healthcare, CETA could impose European patent regimes for brand-name pharmaceuticals.
Health

Connection is health. (Berry, 2002, 132)

Clearly from the accounts above, health, on its continuum from the personal to the cultural, is a dynamic process and outcome of all essential elements of life discussed and visioned here – meaningful work, pleasure and beauty, good food, an economy based in sustainable agriculture and trade – existing in balance and oriented to the benefit of all beings. In contrast, if we encounter serious illness in our culture, we can find ourselves subject to a medicalized, often coercive and commodified model of health, with its own potent hegemonic force that resists assertive self-responsibility for health decisions. Here again according to the sequestration of experience (Giddens, 1991), we often forfeit personal knowledge and responsibility for our health in exchange for the good fortune of free healthcare, where we are again positioned as consumers and where practices often serve practitioners over users (Sholom Glouberman). Thus beginning at the personal level we enact and experience the absence of an ethic of care encompassing self-care. We see the macrocosmic reflection of this in what Berry terms the total economy. Berry (2002) ties the subject of health back to its appropriate context within this larger question of wholeness, where our bodies, our local places, the earth and the larger Creation all converge. Health, states Berry, is a double sense of singular integrity – completeness in ourselves – and of communal belonging.

A medical doctor uninterested in nutrition, in agriculture, in the wholeness of mind and spirit is as absurd as a farmer who is uninterested in health. Our fragmentation of this subject cannot be our cure, because it is our disease….It is wrong to think that bodily health is compatible with spiritual confusion or cultural disorder, or with polluted air and water or impoverished soil. Intellectually, we know that these patterns of interdependence exist; we understand them better now perhaps than we ever have before; yet modern social and cultural patterns contradict them and make it difficult or impossible to honour them in practice. (99)

Tying this together with the dis-ease of our age through the disconnection of body and soul, he continues:

What the specialization of our age suggests, in one example after another, is not only that fragmentation is a disease, but that the diseases of the disconnected parts are similar or analogous to one another. Thus they memorialize their lost unity, their relation persisting
in their disconnection. Any severance produces two wounds that are, among other things, the record of how the severed parts once fitted together. (Berry, 2002, 106)

Berry (2002) draws plainly the indivisible links between health, work, place and community. Our economy is intrinsically unhealthful in separating us as far as possible from the sources of life (material, social and spiritual), which we have given over to corporations and specialists. Only by restoring these broken connections can we be healed. The direct connections between living and eating, eating and working, working and loving, have been lost. Berry suggests that both growing food and eating, rather than being seen as drudgery, are sacraments, in which we enact our oneness with the Creation:

As the connections have been broken by the fragmentation and isolation of work, they can be restored by restoring the wholeness of work. There is work that is isolating, harsh, destructive, specialized or trivialized into meaninglessness. And there is work that is restorative, convivial, dignified and dignifying, and pleasing. Good work is not just the maintenance of connections – as one is now said to work ‘for a living’ or to ‘support a family’ – but the enactment of connections. It is living, and a way of living; it is not support for a family in the sense of an exterior brace or prop, but is one of the forms and acts of love. (133)

Notions of health and work then are tied inseparably with community, where a totality of human culture is founded on knowledge of ways of work, pleasure and education, free of tyranny, and where all neighbours, soil, water, and nonhuman creatures are included. In contrast, an economy synonymous with competition, where agriculture is proclaimed with empty rhetoric and corporate coercion to feed the world, in truth, rises out of the death struggle of farmer with farmer (211). In a culture then where such conditions prevail, healing, rather than health, becomes a main concern.

Part Three has shown how recovery of the art and work of vital human community, as visioned in Part Two, encompasses the understanding of work and economy as reconciled with genuine human need, sustenance, creative capacity, and well-being. It is perhaps inevitable in the course of human evolution that such dehumanizing and destructive notions of work and economy as ours might have evolved, but more difficult to comprehend how long and deeply hegemonic forces would succeed in keeping them in place and pre-empt us seeing their gross error. Many of us wonder what transformative paths we can pursue amidst such historical forces, to avert further social and ecological crisis. In the concluding section, Towards Community, I draw out such implications from the discussions in this paper.
Freedom

This freedom I possess, such a blessing. Strange space I occupy. I wake in the morning and I can meditate, feed my cat breakfast, stay in my cosy space and get to work, as wood chopper/word chopper. From the age of 18, my father woke at 5.30am to go out into the dark and the noise in the plant for a good part of his 40 years working there, in order to feed us. I have no car, I do not own a home, but I feel rich and so very privileged in these and so many other ways he and my mother could not have dreamt of.

Furniture Dreams

I keep thinking the last few days of an idea of a local, ethically-sourced business that makes beautiful furniture and other small carpentry. How it encompasses so perfectly my lifelong love of wood, of craft. And just as this idea sits so deliciously in me, I happen to pass on my walk Friday eve, at a neighbour on Yorkshire St (they happen to have lived in this co-op some years back before they bought this little brick house they live in), the lovely green and white big van they own, but this time I notice it has an elegant sign on the sign “Evolvebuilders” at evolvebuilders.ca. and the simple tag line something like: “Elegant. Classic. Beautiful.” I quickened inside, reading the truth of the sign in its reflection of the company, as the sign itself and the van are exquisite. I also know that the man who lives there must be one of this team because of the way he so beautifully rebuilt their porch a couple of years ago. I have so often admired it. And I looked it up online and indeed the site and what they are about is so wonderful. It is an assembled, integrated group of craftsmen, builders, designers, etc. So that together they work in the ways things once would have been built, through whole and integrated relationships with artisan skills and approaches. The place I am envisioning would be like this, making furniture not only for itself but, as an affirmation of the possibility of local economy, local production and consumption. Hmmm…and this at the moment when I feel a sense of revelation around possibilities for this new phase of work in my own life. So, without knowing anything, I shall simply for now, hold it still, near and dear.
Thoughts on a GMO Panel in Guelph March 10, 2011 held by Liberal MP

It was astounding that 10 years after moving back here in 2001, when GMOs had already been labelled in the UK from the beginning and here hardly anyone even talks about it except every few years, that a panel was going to be held. A lot of people came. There were, incredibly, police cars parked outside during the event which attracted a good crowd of people. The discussion seemed a very predictable analysis refusing to take sides, having to present both sides, all the usual whitewash approach which they call ‘balance’. One panel member said we shouldn’t denounce U of G because of their supporting all the GMO research because they also are doing the organic stuff etc. This seems quite flawed logic to me as if a right next to a wrong makes the wrong okay. There were no straight responses to the citing by some audience questions of the violence done by Monsanto. One panel member labelled a question ‘loaded’ (!?) just because the person asked about retribution done by Monsanto groups somewhere. They reiterated (still, 10 years later..) that not enough Canadians know about how 70% of our food is gmo, etc.—well, how could they?! We haven’t been communicated to or consulted about it, have we?! One panel member said, ‘We have been so busy selling to farmers but forgot to sell to public’ (!) Surely the point should be not to sell to us but to consult with us about whether we want it or not! One panel member said the reason why e.g. UK is more against GMOs’ is, ‘oh, well that’s because of hoof & mouth disease’ etc. and did not even acknowledge the demonstrated fact of their actually being just more vocal and exercising agency about what food they consume. I felt that the whole event was framed as just a matter of ‘choice/two sides/positive and negative aspects/surely gmos some good etc./. There was no presence or space for ethical questions or questions of corporate violence and criminality, no forum for legitimate conflict, and three police cars outside. We are an infantilized, suppressed culture.

As I finish this paper, the Guelph Tribune [March 15, 2012] contains an article entitled ‘Activists set to challenge multinational in Guelph,’ describing the action as ‘hot on the heels of the Occupy movement...’ I have lived here 10 years now and heard barely a peep about it. [Guelph Tribune, 2012]

The boy who chose my corn

August - There is a family at the market with lots of good food. They all 20 or so of them seem to work there every week. There is something very peaceful about them and they know the measure of things. They range in age from 60 down to newborns. The little boy of about 8 is blonde and gentle. He served me when I bought corn this day and I asked for four ears and he waited back a bit and asked, *do you want to choose them?* And normally I would choose, fussy as I am about everything. But this time I just said *that’s okay you choose.* And he did. I don’t think I’ve ever had someone choose corn for me quite like that. But he didn’t just pick four ears of corn up. Each one he lifted up, he held it, opened the rusk at the top just a bit, in a deliberate way like he must have been taught, and took a firm moment to look, and seeing it was okay, put it in the bag. He did that four times. Every time the same. And I was sure that corn he chose was the right corn for me.

Feb.16.12- exposure of Foxcon

On CBC Connect feature this eve, about New Yorker Mike Daisey’s exposure of Foxcon, where all our Apple and other electronics goods are made. He went to China himself, talked to the workers at Foxcon. It’s like a city, with over 200,000 workers in 15 factories. They work between 16-30 hour shifts, and a few of them committed suicide in 2010. They live in dorms where they are arranged in assembly the same as their work, that’s all they know, yet they line up to try and get work there. Apple makes excuses for it, says ‘it’s complicated’ but Mike Daisey says, ‘there’s 13 year-old girls working there, I’d like to know what is complicated about that?’ He is a ‘storyteller’, does monologues...I attempt to understand how can such conditions not come under the rubric of institutionalized abuse and infringement of human rights. Why isn’t it represented in the media in those terms all the time, so that there would be a basis for action?

Three weeks later, there is an item about the fact that apparently he fabricated a lot of what he said that night. He went to China but he only talked to a few, and saw only a part of what he said he saw. So he broke all the rules of journalism and that became the big story. So now it wasn’t ‘so bad’ for these Chinese workers. The big deal now was how he broke the rules of journalism. Well, so deal with that, and how about now getting on with finding out everything we can about Foxcon and doing something about it. Instead, it seems we’re right back to ignoring it as we so love to do. Heard about Foxcon lately?
Feb. 2, 2012  a CBC news documentary about asbestos

My father breathed in asbestos all the time at work for years and his lungs were affected; it started to take effect later on. At the Johns-Manville plant in Quebec and in Scarborough in the 1950s, doctors withheld x-rays of damaged lungs of workers, using asbestos, which were finally published in 1955, and then falsified. Their lungs showed asbestos fibre. They hid their diseased lungs at the asbestos-funded research clinic. Science was manipulated through corporations to mislead the public about the real hazards and risks. Even McGill University partnered with them, and they evaded compensation to victims. Many brought it home with them wearing their asbestos overalls. By 1965, people were getting to know the truth, so they had a meeting at Chateau Frontenac and followed the example of the tobacco industry and did studies of their own to show it was safe. British scientist Dr. Macdonald at McGill was hired to do the studies 1966-72. He was paid thousands. They ride on doubt, don’t bother with finding out for sure until 30 or 40 years later. Asbestos is used in the petro-chemical industry too and all over Ontario. Canada exports it for use in the developing world, such as in India.

May 20, 2011

Report on CBC news that the manufacturing sector shows signs they are bringing their production back to Canada because labourers in China are so expanded now from outsourcing and with economic problems, they are demanding higher wages, also higher cost of shipping with oil prices, so it is becoming more cost effective for them to do their work here. They believe we will see more of this.

Walking round the park on the one really cold day of this winter so far. What could be brighter than this? The cold, the coming dark, the crisp air, the strength and freedom of my legs moving, forward, rhythm, motion, the knowledge of work done, of food and an evening coming. This is goodness, happiness, health – the flow of activity and rest, rest and activity. Activity is such the preferable word for work. It is that rest after exercise that Morris spoke of that is truly everything for well-being, that has always been pure pleasure to me. And then coming back, the image of my black cat against the snow, waiting for me, so happy out there in it, like me.
City Hall Ice Rink

Skating again today, and it makes me realize how these body-knowledges – cycling, swimming, skating, the ones that go with you, held there in the body, always there – connect in all directions. They hold the through-line of your life; they are places of order and of rhythm and recovery of being, of childhood... They connect you to yourself because they are solitary activities, yet joined, in their watery way, to others in the stream of life skating past you. They are metaphors for the sheer motion and trajectory of life in space and in time. They are places to go back to - the place of skating, the place of cycling, the place of swimming. And again Jan.29...Today, skating is my sustenance.... In skating you are never solitary. You are part of the stream of human being. You are in it together. The heaven of skating outside is that there are no regulatory systems or boundaries obstructing or delaying the encounter between your body and the activity, either physically or administratively; this is heaven. It is direct encounter. Today there are three girls here in their early twenties, talking loud, lipping back and forth at each other. One is messing about on her blackberry even as they hang out on the ice. She’s mouthing something she’s reading on her blackberry out loud to her mates, something that ends with the word, ‘motherfucker,’ probably a song; she’s pleased with herself for saying it. Two of them have extremely long fingernails; one has purple ones and another blue. I don’t know how they did up their skates or how they text on their blackberries for that matter, with such nails. One of them stands on the side and smokes cigarettes. You can tell they are pleased to be here, even though they do little uninterrupted skating. It has brought them a pleasure that you can sense they did not perhaps expect to have here. The loud one with the blackberry gets next to her friend on the bench when they finish and starts talking to her, saying, ‘we should have brought Emma’ and...and...’let’s arrange to come one day in the week, after school,’ she says..’My mom will let you bring us in her car.’ This girl really wants to come skating again.
CONCLUSION – TOWARDS COMMUNITY

Adkin (1998) writes that to create a counter-hegemonic discourse, the very complex task of social activists seeking to build social movements is to link discursively the kinds of needs which many subjects are expressing to democratic principles...to arguments about the conditions for happiness, and to concrete proposals for change (307).

This paper has made a wide-ranging attempt to mark and name destructive elements of our present cultural formation and to intimate constructive directions for a vital, sustainable culture of recovered wisdom. This I suggest is something we must ceaselessly move towards even if we never arrive. We may indeed not survive to reach such a condition in any form that we can presently imagine, but we must vision and act in faith, remembering that a turn of the head, a turning, and change can be swiftly accomplished. In this concluding section, I will consider some implications and issues arising from these discussions which synthesize their key concerns and which suggest approaches for working with them.

When health diminishes, in the body, in our social formation, and the planet, healing becomes an essential modality of life. Walter’s (1988) recovery of the Greek therapeia, discussed in the section Notes on Place as intimating ‘close attendance’ or ‘caring’ for something, suggests itself as a fitting notion for such a cultural project. As the farmer to her cultivation, the parents to their children, to the gods, worship – so we, as beings need to attend to and heal our visions and means of culture and all its forms and places. Recovering our planet will in all likelihood demand that we revision and heal our notions of work and economy. We need to be all eyes, all ears, for what needs tending and what might be. The efforts must come simultaneously from every direction and accumulatively through time: from education, parenting, grassroots groups, political will, and individual values and life choices. But the humane community and culture we might hope for are an ongoing creation; the means is the end. Care and creativity are deeply intertwined energies that are both deeply insinuated together in this effort and also describe what we seek. Thus all we need do is begin.

I suggest key areas for attention are: approaches to learning, open inquiry regarding spirituality and religion, social visioning and policies, attunement to emergent historical patterns, and the task of visioning and inscribing community within a revitalized sense of personal agency, creativity, and sense of the everyday.
Approaches for Learning

As Walter (1988) conveys in his approach to placeways, the archaic notion of *theoria* meant seeing the sights for yourself, getting a worldview. He describes it as

... a complex but organic mode of active observation – a perceptual system that included asking questions, listening to stories and local myths, and feeling as well as hearing and seeing. It encouraged an open reception to every kind of emotional, cognitive, symbolic, imaginative, and sensory experience – a holistic practice of thoughtful awareness that engaged all the senses and feelings. (18)

In this way that Walter sought a recovery of holistic theory with which to approach places to counter what he observed as a ‘poverty of discourse’ and lack of theoretical resources amid the mechanistic discussion on the problems of cities, issues of urban planning, slums, and ‘social problems’, so we need such vital resources for our entire place of culture and its work. Walter and his colleagues hungered amid the inert ideas of social science for a *restitution of grounded intelligence*, for theory that took account of immediate experience and could render the obvious scrutable (9). I believe such an approach can fruitfully inform both our approaches to learning and all the areas of endeavour and concern cited here.

Buber (1992, 2002) refuted classical utopia in his recognition of more partial, dispersed utopias that could occur in many mundane contexts, whether in co-operative villages or adult education. He saw adult education as a site for generating frameworks of common discourse between different, disparate sectors of society if constructed as open dialogue. Such discourse was among those forms he believed held transformative potential for the cultural creativity whose conditions he avidly sought to identify. Could we pursue such scope in our own models of adult education, between the perhaps over-administered municipal versions of this available, the practical courses of community colleges and the university programs we tend to position as more valuable, yet which so often nullify questions of value? Buber’s perspective too, can be tied to a valuation of the modality of improvisation. As in his emphasis on constant weighing of issues in community, his citing of partial utopias in mundane situations can be read as innate appreciation, after De Certeau (1984), of the unprogrammatic as the source of change, as what happens here and now, or what we make happen here and now.

Alexander (1977) in his pattern no.18, *Network of Learning*, after Ivan Illich and other radical thinkers on education, advocates an emphasis away from teaching which makes us passive, and on to learning, through a decentralized network that, in cities especially is congruent with urban structure itself, where
learning occurs in all the situations where it naturally can and does. This is reminiscent of Raymond Williams (1989) who said *we learned where we could* (5). Such voluntary participation is the alternative to the social control exerted through schools. Thus:

People of all walks of life come forth, and offer a class in the things they know and love: professionals and workgroups offer apprenticeships in their offices and workshops, old people offer to teach whatever their life work and interest has been, specialists offer tutoring in their special subjects. Living and learning are the same. It is not hard to imagine that eventually every third or fourth household will have at least one person in it who is offering a class or training of some kind. (Alexander, 1977, 101)

From this foundation, Alexander proposes pattern no. 43, *University as a Marketplace*. By this idea, universities support the network of learning by recovering their original role as in the Middle Ages of acting as a marketplace of ideas with a collection of teachers who attracted students according to their interest in what they offered. Alexander and his colleagues offer a specific physical template for this, and leave the question of its administration open, citing various examples of developments in this direction such as the UK’s Open University which was emerging at that time. Regardless, the key principle is that such a university marketplace is open to all ages on any basis, and that anyone can offer a class, ideally according to the model of master and apprentice.

Similarly, William Morris (1890[2003]) makes the claim for access to a liberal education for everyone in a society also free from the drudgery of useless work and thus availing its members of the time needed for such an undertaking. For Williams this is inseparable from communal concerns, involving opportunity, that is, to have my share of whatever knowledge there is in the world according to my capacity or bent of mind...and also to have my share of skill of hand, and ideally more than one craft....for the benefit of the community (262). Morris implied such education as a wide-ranging, flexible affair, such that for a shoemaker, a due amount of easily conceivable arrangement would enable me to make shoes in Rome, say, for three months, and to come back with new ideas...(263). He is further adamant on dismissing division-of-labour, with all people learning to swim, ride, sail a boat, one or two elementary arts such as carpentry or smithing, and...most should know how to reap a field and plough it (we should soon drop machinery in agriculture I believe when we were free) (272). In Morris’s vision too, the community is a ready source of teaching, opportunities, and material.
These visions of learning summarily oppose our present conditions where, as Giddens (1991) and Berry (2002) remind us, we lose fundamental and everyday knowledges which are simply not used or are appropriated by experts. With such approaches to active learning in place, I propose that the following content is particularly important for educating towards a constructive culture: 1) Courses that assess current realities, namely, the impact of capitalism and globalization on work definitions, human identity, and human and environmental well-being; how hegemonic influences shape our lives and social fabric, such as how we are constructed as consumers; extending from these inquiries, dialogic visioning for forms and self-management of constructive community and localized economies; 2) Science, psychology and medicine that are structurally linked to answer the need of constructive community, parental preparation, child care and development, therapeutic and self-care, and further linked with critical theory responding to the effects of capitalist culture on psychological formation; likewise these studies would incorporate the pedagogy of actual community models for healing and medicine such as exemplified by Mate (2010); that is, they would be structured as a two-way process of learning, carrying out and bringing in from the outside; 3) Plentiful courses about growing and processing food and approaches to agriculture; 4) Plentiful courses about survival skills; 5) Plentiful courses about building houses and making furniture and business models that can go with these as intrinsic to local economy; 6) Plentiful courses on movement, body awareness, dance and modalities such as improvisation; these should be as emphasized as sport; 7) History, arts and humanities, with emphasis on the model of visiting artists to share and discuss their work and aims, to model and affirm the innate creativity available to all our endeavours; 8) A series of programs on a collective-commons of ideas, based on the notion that the purpose of human inquiry is the practical knowing which becomes practical service to the aim of human flourishing (Heron & Reason, 1997). Such a program can reflect an ecology of ideas following Bateson’s ecology of mind, intending the care, recovery, and ongoing engagement with key critical social ideas that are inclusive of the non-academic, interdisciplinary and nondisciplinary, the feminine, and the depth which Lefebvre (1966) claims we have abandoned or refused. This would ensure that such ideas and stories live and do not languish. In such a way we can create a common culture of ideas, of ways forward to what could be, 9) Permeating all of these programme elements would be a commitment to reflective approaches to pedagogy, which are concerned with learning and teaching as sites that actively encourage dialogue and truth-telling (Palmer, 1983[1993]).
Open inquiry into notions of the sacred

There are tensions among the thinkers cited here, some of whom adhere to secular approaches and others from a deeply spiritual approach such as Buber (1992, 2002) and Berry (2002). It must be noted that religious discourse such as Berry’s and Buber’s is an uncomfortable territory in our time, except in segregated religious contexts. Yet the challenge may be to recover religion from its damaging manifestations and distortions through history, to find in it the sanity and totality we have lost. Berry’s writing foregrounds this issue and so it acts as an effective example alongside Raymond Williams (196, 1989) and William Morris (1890[2003]) coming from more secular perspectives, and then Bateson (1972, 1979[2002]) whose work is highly concerned with delineating the sacred and the aesthetic (1987). The theme that arises is the difficulty of the terms and the language of such discourse and I believe it is a key question for our time.

Speaking of her father’s commitment to the sacred – the integrated fabric of mental process that envelops all our lives – Mary Catherine Bateson clarifies that religion is the principal way he saw that we have been able to address our epistemological problems, through its vast, interconnected metaphorical systems (Bateson & Bateson, 1987, 200). It has been religion that has provided an extended metaphor which made it possible for ordinary people to think at levels of integrated complexity otherwise impossible, enabling the truth of integration (Bateson, & Bateson, 1987, 196). By contrast we must be concerned today because, although we can persuade our children to learn a long list of facts about the world, they don’t seem to have the capacity to put them together into a single, unified understanding—there is no pattern which connects. (196)

If we have no notion of the sacred or a sense of connection to cosmos, then what foundation is there for care of things, gratitude or communal yearning? The very fact of our innate creativity seems to elaborate to that larger participation and creation in which we are embedded. As Berry (2002) writes, ...The creation is not in any sense independent of the Creator, the result of a primal creative act long over and done with, but is the continuous, constant participation of all creatures in the being of God (308).
Social visioning and policies

This is essential to pursue and to facilitate input by as many as possible. As observed in Part Two, our approaches to social change can often recapitulate many of our social issues – lacking indepth analysis of social processes, taking at face value and pursuing the sentimentalized notions of family and community fed to us by the media in reinforcing capitalist structures of work and economy, failing to account for questions of meaning and power in social groups, communicating to the converted, acting in isolation, dealing with symptoms and not getting to the root of things, and lacking mechanisms for genuine evaluation or not implementing such evaluation. Bookchin cited the need for a vanguard in leading the way towards communalism. Where that occurs, whatever the processes or approaches used for what we will conveniently term community-building, must iterate the ends themselves, that is, they must involve care, creativity and as much participation as individuals will contribute, beginning with visioning and agenda setting and incorporating dialogic approaches that do not sidestep conflict and power issues. We could remember here Bateson’s (1972) recognition that the problem of how to transmit our ecological reasoning to those who we wish to influence is in itself an ecological problem, for we are not outside this ecology for which we plan, but always and inevitably a part of it (504). Thus our ecological propogation of such plans is more important than the plans themselves.

Just as we care for things and processes which we ourselves have created, we likewise can hope to foster a culture of care through communities that are self-governing and also traceably connected to processes of production and consumption. Alexander’s (1977) pattern language for viable self-governed municipalities and subcultures is a valuable (and realizable?) practical tool for realizing such communities. These approaches are not the same as striving for or imposing an idealistic manifestation of community. They are a way of deciding how to live constructively and beneficially, a way to move towards and which, even when realized, is always moving towards. The ontological communities sketched in Part Two can be realized as the inner forms and ideals that guide us, and which manifest in multiple forms of community through many people in many places and which may indeed in some places and times be closely approximated in the external forms.

On a social policy level, basic income would seem to be a key strand to improving conditions for widespread well-being, enabling people to turn their attention to the many personal and communal tasks and endeavours that can build vital culture. We could tie such a basic income to parameters determined regarding consumption, environmental impact measures, and how much we need to live on per household in a sustainable way, all tied to these measures. Though perhaps taking some political will and intricacies
of negotiation to bring it about, such an approach could in time prove to support the task of reframing our meaning and experiences of work, economic migration, subjection to corporate hegemony, and environmental well-being. Basic income could then further along the line, be among the facilitating conditions for the diverse emergent communities conceived here, allowing for the gradual unfolding of new localized economies and practices in production and consumption.

The efforts to concretize our aims from there can encompasses multifold grassroots activity with agenda setting by all involved. Broadly sketched, we could envisage the aim of local production on the part of many participating communities of whatever size and determinations and transform widely outward from there, always working out from specific instances, literally from the ground up. Every such locality can set a number of people to work being farmers/gardeners, urban or rural, to the model of feeding the urban areas in their vicinity. The translocal political communities we have discussed (as pertaining mainly to larger ‘global cities’), if released from economic bondage to low-paying and demeaning employment, could be intrinsically motivated to participate in these communal undertakings. In short, we can build new conceptions of what is a ‘local’ economy and its practices.

Change again, can arise from a convergence of efforts from many directions and levels. Hartmann (1998) contributes that the only solution is to transform social relations by challenging systems of domination, by not only ridding ourselves of oppressive conceptual frameworks but calling on the state to develop social policies that alleviate existing inequalities. This could occur through democratizing bureaucracy, devolving power to regional governments, democratization of the workplace, and through establishing community-controlled businesses and production councils to replace transnational corporations. She cites that decentralizing power in both state and economy makes wide-scale domination by a few more difficult. It does not guarantee against it, but would at least impede, not promote, domination. Economic and state decisions would be supplanted by production councils that meet community needs in an ecological manner by consulting with consumers and producers. Concrete political actions can encompass supporting locally-controlled businesses, products and services, kicking our addiction to ecologically harmful goods and services and supporting parallel policies in home, workplace, community and government settings. We can further support local political mobilization in our communities and throughout the world, facilitating direct community action and exchange of skills and knowledge. We can network with other local, social change groups both in our community and transnationally, encouraging free trade of ideas, experiences and challenges globally; this can both confront and act across global political and economic forces.
Emergent Patterns

A key aim in this thesis is to suggest how what we call globalization as our contemporary historical context might ultimately resolve into the pattern that connects, truly iterating Bateson’s (1972) ‘self-healing tautology,’ of which destruction may or may not prove to be a phase. The forces of globalization, in reconfiguring our notions and experience of place through the motions of populations across the globe, in turn fracture the palimpsest of place-bound, fixed or sentimentalized notions of community, revealing already existing complex, emergent and multi-form sites of community, and crucially seeding conditions for its deeper existential and emergent meanings to unfold. Places and communities are likewise recovered as sites of politicization and change (Massey, 1994; 2005) as globalization both places and displaces citizens and workers in new ways, catalyzing new issues of boundary, identity, inequality and power relations. This establishes new aspects of hegemony (as related to work and economy) and new bases of agency for counterhegemony (Appadurai, 1998[2008]; Sassen, 2007), as citizens, workers and activists enact community both in their displaced/places and across translocal networks that engage with issues of work, identity, ecology, power and place with ‘others’ across the globe, both below and above the level of the national (Burawoy, et al, 2000). The civic-communal approach to local-global crises recovered through these translocal engagements (whether in urban or rural contexts) thus circularly iterates the direction of change as such approaches seed throughout localities across the globe, catalyzing forms of community historically as yet unrealized. These might range from the smallest groups of interest to larger-scale fully self-governing communities, implicitly already aspiring towards mutual accountability within a global network of such localities (Bookchin, 1992[1995], 1995, 2007; Buber 1992, 2002). Such an envisioned pattern of emergence might arise only in the most enforced way, through crisis and necessity, and if it succeeds in pre-empting ultimate ecological catastrophe, can proceed on its way to a new pattern of culture. It seems only a question of at what point of crisis the historical repatterning will occur to reveal the next phase of community, and whether we survive or not. As suggested in Part Two, I propose the theoria that our ecological crisis ensues from the absence of, and can only be healed by the emergence of genuine community.

I refer here to emerging patterns in several senses: the pattern of historical movement through globalization towards community, as well as the new patterns which community itself may manifest in terms of its forms, meaning, and spatiality. A fitting element in this theorization of patterns is the collective awareness of ourselves as participant in larger ecological patterns (Bateson, 1972). As Williams remarked, citing Young (Williams, 1961, 22) the continuous process of creation sees the rhythmic succession over time of two general laws of the universe: the tendency for random processes to bind and
organize into larger units, and then for this unity to dissolve again into fresh randomness. In this way, all species remain in balance with their surroundings, and life maintains communication with the non-living world. Likewise, Berry (2002) states: To divide body and soul, or body and mind, is to inaugurate an expanding series of divisions—not, however, an infinitely expanding series, because it is apparently the nature of division sooner or later to destroy what is divided; the principle of durability is unity (107). Buber (1992) in his work on cultural patterns notes that the increasing division of realms heralds the disintegration of the culture, which then tends to move towards re-establishment of the original unity. We can vision the end of globalization, extending Bateson’s pattern that connects, to be an emergent ecology of community.

Visioning Community within a revitalized sense of personal agency, creativity, and everyday life

Raymond Williams (1961) wrote: At a less organized level, we fall back on what Coleridge called ‘abstract knowledge’ where we think of ourselves as separated beings (and opposing mind and nature, subject and object, art to science, thing to thought, death to life, etc.). Though we know these divisions to be false, just as we know theories of art which divide the categories of ‘artist’ and ‘reality’ are no longer relevant, yet, Williams reminds us, our thinking is so habituated to these divisions that to grasp the substantial unity, the sense of a whole process, is to begin a long and difficult revolution in the mind (23).

This then, promises to be the revolution in which we can all participate and from which the social and political transformations can follow. Creative minds intrinsically see and enact humane social formations, innately concerned with modalities of care and concerned to protect human well-being. All of us then are artists and makers of our lives, of the things we need, so that our divisions of arts from craftsmanship from labour are meaningless and destructive. Berry (2002) points out that the great artistic traditions have never been divorced from religion or economy, nor had anything to do with self-expression, or cults of originality and genius, but rather, the arts traditionally belong to the neighbourhood. They are the means by which the neighbourhood lives, works, remembers, worships, and enjoys itself (317). This resonates with Morris’s (1890[2003]) hopes for our recovered sensibilities to manifest in art that is sensuous and human (274). All this is a way of saying what we all can do: create a life and work which is our own.

We have seen in the discussion of everyday life theory, that this can be the arena where we support or not, the edifice of capitalism, through the practices of work and economy where we apply our available energy. Buber (2002[1930]) wrote, ...there is no extraordinary moment in our ordinary everyday lives where world and creation are not linked...Community can only be realized in the givenness of everyday
life, at its lowest level.... (Buber, 2002, 256). Highmore (2002) reminds us of the potential of the everyday to generate new political forms. In other words, the job of description can be the necessary prerequisite for allowing new forms of ‘political’ critique to emerge (28). I have aimed in this paper to affirm and enact such knowledges.

Everything arises from and returns to individual agency in the all–encompassing realm of everyday life. I would argue that the realms of work, consumerism, health and food are the areas where hegemonic forces are most powerful. The corollary is that, to the degree we can find the ways to live creatively and vitally within or outside their frameworks, or are fortunate to access good conditions and resources, our lives can yet be (sometimes remarkably) self-determined. Education, though highly regulated and hegemonic, is amenable to challenge in some contexts. Globalized trade and production regimes are harder to counter. We are subject to them apart from where individual or local alternatives and capacities exist. But we can counter them through our consumer practices as much as possible. In the realm of employment, even if we have to partake in this model as is for a time, there is a universe of difference between unconscious alignment with hegemonic authority, and enacting it with consciousness, challenging it where it crosses our path. Further, renewing our notion of work and economy within our own lives now can recover the richness of our ‘occupations’ and activities in the everyday, the discovery of ourselves, not as ‘workers’ but as who we are, towards transforming the larger formation. We can proceed by confronting our personal relations to all these realms: food, work, health, consuming, and community, creativity and parenting. What patterns are we supporting or challenging? How do we relate to the media and technologies pervading our environment? How do we bring all this into everyday life? How do we sustain ourselves and our families? How do we dwell, how do we live in place? What do we think and care about and want to learn about? What do we teach our children? As Winnicott (2002) reminds us, our parental devotion...provides the only real basis for society and the only factory for the democratic tendency in a country’s social system (203).

The point is that it is precisely at the level of the individual and in the everyday, that the cycle of hegemony can be broken, in claiming our capacity and energy to vision. Berger (2001) writes ...every true revolutionary act must derive from a personal hope of being able to contest in that act the world as it is (190). There are many refractions to be followed here concerning how we position ourselves in relation to dominant structures. We may ache to change the prevailing models, to find work that is connected and brings the living wage that we need. Here is where it begins, human to human, two or more individuals who might together create a connected context of work, but we cannot achieve it by wishing, or by
ourselves. If we are not in the context where we can achieve that, or if we have not found our personal solutions where work and our authenticity coincide, if we have not found a protective layer from that exposure – an earning partner or independent wealth –, and yet if we cannot function within the mindset of abstracted or meaningless work roles, if we cannot stomach doing work that is destroying the planet, if we are self-supporting women in a still gendered world, then we are left to survive some way in the world as it is. We may then necessarily dwell in the margins amidst real vulnerabilities and exposures, and face the challenge of making an active and positive valuation of that life-space.

And there is the thing: the individual phase and level is the existential stage on which in the end we bear conscience and cost for our conception of life and how we enact it or what it has dealt us. Whatever we choose to do, resign ourselves to, or find ourselves unable to do, the cost can be high. We may not be able to invent. We may not have the will that Buber articulates as the condition for engendering human community (1992, 2002). We may feel maddened in our sensitivity to the world’s madness. But somehow we must both imagine and improvise a life. We may need to live within our love of life itself, within reverie, within our faith and our interior, felt sense of belonging and aesthetic sense of life, immersed in the rhythm of life-affirming tasks and their inherent pleasures. We may in a sense then by necessity die inside to this vision and willingly or resignedly fail in the world’s terms, because to live them as they are would kill us or destroy the earth. This is where we change the world, create the world, in small corners, creating and inhabiting, for moments or decades, Buber’s partial utopias that simmer everywhere and join up to transform the pattern of culture. These are among our hopeful, life-affirming responses to hegemony and the madness it can inflict: knowing that qualitatively we change the world every minute, in minor, by who we are and what we vision. Morris (1890[2003]) noted the innate fact of human constructiveness and agency in stating that life is dull without endeavor (272). What will be the vital endeavours we can dream to undertake?

Buber (1930[2002] writes, highlighting the convergence of history, the everyday, and personal agency:

God speaks to us hour after hour in everyday life, in the treadmill of work, and we can answer him by how we live in the treadmill of work, in the possibilities of space and time, and of this moment. There we can hallow and approach God. If not there, then nowhere. (257)
Concluding Thoughts

It may indeed seem that the crisis of metacommunication which Bateson articulates characterizes our entire society now, as a kind of insanity at large. We may be faced with enormous collective work, feeling compelled to impose, while not imposing our visions for change. But once the converging impacts of renewed approaches in parenting and education have the opportunity to unfold their effects over decades, then the life-affirming nature that Marcuse (1992) and others describe will instill conditions to flower more and more widely of their own.

Paradox in fact lies at the heart of this thesis, between an unconditional celebration of life and the need to sustain critique of and action against our prevailing capitalist structures, both of which I feel responsible to in life and in this paper. How can we live this tension and paradox? One is often sacrificed for the other or defeats the other, but I feel our work in the world is to constantly seek their reconciliation. The continuance of human faith and well-being are conditional upon the holding of this and many other paradoxes. Our innate joy of life (for which thinkers like Morris and Berry speak so plaintively) and its suffering always go alongside each other. As a social example, we stand the knowing of the suffering of others near and far, whatever the conditions of our own life. Culturally too, we can retain the view that, though temporally and historically we may be living through deep cultural crisis, this may be necessary to learn our errors. We can sustain faith then that in its isness, all is well with the world, however awful things may appear, as long as we are working to alter them. These matters clearly tie in with the questions of spirituality discussed above.

Buber’s notion of partial utopias can be connected to these paradoxes. I read his notion as iterating this sense of joy and an affirmation that utopia does in fact exist at all times, within particular or ongoing moments, events, environments, in the realm of everyday life where, when free enough, we can more easily experience states of agency and creativity, or in particular individual lives where a person is able through their nature or circumstance to act in the world as they wish, to do the work or activity they wish, and contribute to their community in a manner authentic to them. In short these utopias, even illusory or imaginal, can exist for many of us in the remainedered spaces of collective conditions or structures such as our capitalist economy which, as and where it intersects with our lives, can undermine or block our access to that core experience of life’s goodness.

But I suggest these paradoxes take on new meaning and implications in our time. We have evolved to a phase in globalization where we can not only know about (that is, receive information about), but detach
ourselves from unspeakable human suffering afar, and, through factors such as sequestration of experience (Giddens, 1991), abstraction of others, distance, technology and ideology, can justify, ignore or render invisible such suffering or the the role of our social institutions and lifestyles in perpetrating it. That is, we have evolved a cultural condition in which it seems normal when personal well-being is conceived as a notion separable from the wellbeing of others, where empathy seems a special characteristic, rather than an inherent quality of humanness. This could only have evolved through a series of incremental breaches of a world of necessarily communal groups in which practices harmful to any humans would be either unthinkable or, if they were practiced, could not be hidden or disguised or dissociated from. No abstracted notion of happiness could derive from such a cultural context. Our distance from and therefore ignorance of the creation of and responsibility for our life goods (food, clothing, objects and tools) and the consequent passivity, sense of entitlement (and passive greed?) that gradually arise from this distance, all conditioned by our market economy, seem the only imaginable causes/conditions of such breaches. These ramify in the loss of understanding of our responsibility for the effects of our actions and decisions on others. The hegemonic effects that hold these factors in place, combined with the emergence of individualism through the centuries, all work together to oppose the communal base of existence and its moral base for happiness and well-being. Joy and well-being, as opposed to our separatist and sentimentalized notion of happiness, are communally-oriented emotions, held in common with others. How are we to enact this?

If we accept the knowledge that our material well-being is in part founded upon the suffering of distant others, this can fuel the ongoing work of critique of systems and structures that undermine the joy of existence that is the right of every human. Any of our ‘occupations,’ even if enacting ethical, communal values and serving genuine human needs, however simple or complex, must be further linked to work against social injustice anywhere, in order to affect counterhegemonic influence. This can be overwhelming but it can also be done by addressing suffering or injustice where we encounter it; what comes in our path or to our attention. Yet the joy and integrity of life demands our faith and acknowledgement at every turn.
On Knowing

I have ached for many years about all I do not know how to do and all I have not learned. It is too much to say here, but somewhere I will. Then there is the difference in knowing in our time. Richard Foreman speaks of the way we used to know: *If you were Goethe, you made of yourself a kind of cathedral of all this knowledge that was stacked and built and organized within you. And it gave a certain verticality to your being. With the internet, he is thinking, we don't have to know much, any more, because it's all available to us, spread out like a flat pancake, and we can access over here, over here, over here, whatever we want, and that spreads us thin. So, in a way, we have much more available to us, in a way we know more in a surface way, but we no longer have this cathedral-like structure.* (2009 interview)

If only I'd known

My daughter at 24. If only she knew, if only I could tell her: of the riches of youth, the need to cherish friends and lovers. How short ten years is. How very much time there is and how much will change and still can change. How very little time there is. How very little so many things will matter in the end, once rightly seen and understood. How they will change their face all the time.

While I do this, my daughter has learned to design and sew...my daughter knows how to sew. Her hands know how to bring beauty into the world.

But this is what I do know: I have experienced profound pedagogy: As I see my mother learn yoga at the age of 72, I am struck anew as we talk about it, how my movement and body training in my early twenties enriched my knowing. As she encounters the initial strangeness of it I am moved to know that I am able to guide her as she attunes to her body for the first time in this way: learning that she does not have to prove anything, please anybody, do something that hurts, but only receive and release and do as her body needs and cares to. If only, only someone had ever *spoken before to her intelligence...*; and how fortunate I have been in my mentors and teachers in Vancouver in the early 80s and the body training I experienced. All that I learned in those teachings is the ground and measure of all else I know. There seems little else to know.
As Benjamin recognized, it is the loss of the presence of death in our culture, as the authority for story, as eternity, with the abbreviation of everything – that is the loss of wisdom. Our lack of death culture is our lack of vital life.

Jan. 29.12 - it is Sunday morning and as I set to work on my thesis, on CBC2 Peter Togni plays Miserere by Allegri, sung by the Choir of Westminster Abbey. It is heavenly, otherworldly; I will think of it as one of the ‘scores’ of my thesis, what I would play during parts of it....

Opus....

February 2012: Yes, this has been an opus, but grocery shopping yesterday I realized that yes, doing this work on culture, work, economy, etc. even with the inevitable sense of futility, etc. even against all odds, does have value, does change you, because you are all the while engaging, acting to direct attention upon a matter and it is this attention and quality of attention that we have lost, and this just all underlines for me what tremendous will and effort it takes [as Raymond Williams emphasized] just to counter the state of affairs, to counter the meanings we have internalized and the forces that keeps us anaesthetized. Three very important people in my life told me I had to make this thesis what I needed it to be, and I have. And in reciprocity, it has become what it needed to be. Its content mirrors all the lifelong concerns and experience I brought to it. And in turn the ways I went about it mirror those same concerns. I wrote it as an everyday work that I felt I must do and follow.

I’m not sure whether I’ve succeeded in what I have attempted here but I have marked and named the territory. And I mark the place of terror and failure in the thesis, having had at many points to come to terms with terror and loss of faith and how that too becomes part of the flesh and knowing of the thesis, puts blood into it and joins up the parts. I feel I am further knit together than before, more held within by newly integrated knowledges or more accurately, awareness. Though I am no master of anything, I have done work that takes me much further along that road of both knowledge and self-knowledge, which is where knowledge begins and ends. Ultimately, as Bateson expressed so perfectly, there is no real point to any of this, or rather a million points or none; they all and none matter. Perhaps it will be of some use to others. But there is no certainty of that. But we can imagine a world where once more, we know all this and no longer need to say it.

A dance by David Earle conveys in 5 minutes what this thesis took 112,000 words and a year and a half to (begin to) attempt to say.
Edifices

In the end, all edifices collapse: Steiner, Grotowski, New-Age, Masters’ degrees, ideas of vocation/calling, notions such as a wisdom culture, concepts such as citizen, and as for community, writing this entire thesis has served above all to leave me wholly unknowing what community is or will be for myself, for the world to come, so finally then, just to...let things be. And I never even got to Grotowski, but realize that extreme work such as his is something I seemed to need to move towards, and still seek, but perhaps I have lived it in my effort here, in the very relentlessness with which I have rooted for what I bring to this paper.

I began by wanting to discover what I wanted to learn about, and proceeded to learn about it. I have completed this chapter of learning and I finish in an unsettled and liminal space. I have learned so much that fittingly I know very little and know there is nothing to know but stories that I love. Knowledge gets in, knowledge gets into you in its own way. What I know or understand is not what I set out in the program to learn or study. I have learned what I had to say, thought I had to say for many years, learned how untrue much of it was. I had to dig down so deep and pull it up, and most times it left me at a loss. Aporia - at a loss – is where I began and have ended.

This project has fulfilled for me what the CDE program sets out to support us to do: developing our capacity. Just as the edifice of my thesis gradually gave way to what was underneath, any edifice in my mind of what the CDE program and degree meant externally for my life, also gradually evaporated. I soon enough realized that it wasn’t the Master’s degree that is the point, or getting a particular job afterward that matters. I always knew that it was the doing of it, the process itself that mattered to me above all, but I now know that was all there was and that that is everything, and which anyway alters my very relation to the external world. Doing the program has increased my capacity to understand and act in many realms and, just as importantly, to register the institutional framework through which I participated in this program. I have had a meta-education about education, as a first-time university graduate in my family: how does such an education feel and fit? How does it mean? I know, for instance, that my educational experience is merely a bridging one in my life, on which I uncomfortably straddle two worlds, not really belonging in either. And through all this, the sense of privilege in being exposed to such an educational experience, to such an opportunity to learn, to create and say my piece, is certain.

It is a turning, a point of change. I know now I am getting to the heart of this thesis. I have been working and writing my way, all this time, to the heart of it, to the thing I want to say
and the voice I want to say it in. I thought I knew both those things but of course I only partially knew them. I hear her voice rising, softly and shrilly, at once gentle and stern. How many thousands of words have I had to write to arrive at this doorway of knowing: that I am trying to speak a balance between unflinchingly naming destructions and yet proclaiming faith in life itself and in the ways we can continue to live well amidst the loss and mess; that I am tired of the voice of reason in my writing, exhausted now by this effort to sustain the voice of (a kind of) reason in an academic paper, a voice not wholly mine. I have been writing my way to freeing her, to get to the plaintive cry at the insanity of it all, the cry that a paper such as this cannot hold (or maybe it does). I have more deeply claimed my voice by exhausting this one, who also needed to speak and make her order of things. I have at least written my way to the voice I wish to now claim.

And finally, that I have recognized the struggle within myself, all my life I think now, to integrate and manifest the voice, form and life of my own sense of the sacred. When I read Wendell Berry, marking passages in his work, I know I am...marking passage...everything of it comes tumbling through in the form of tears, and at some of his utterances, I am left: agape.

For words do not just reflect reality. They are pathways for experience. In conversation they are music, connecting notes that bathe us in kinship; they are creatural, winged beings that lead us to revelation.

This place where I am feels like a door is about to open and you walk through it and become who you always knew you were and are ready to be. I’ve been writing my way to that door. And it’s terrifying as you approach it because you don’t know who you will be on the other side, whether you will recognize yourself or be recognized. And because you know you’re about to remember what it is you would live or die for.
References


http://events.lapl.org/podcasts/PodcastView.aspx?pid=303