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# Complexifying the poetic: toward a poiesis of curriculum

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**COMPLEXIFYING THE POETIC:  
TOWARD A *POIESIS* OF CURRICULUM**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by

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B. S. N., University of Victoria, 1994

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December 2005

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## **DEDICATION**

To Bill (Dr. William E. Doll, Jr.),  
without whom this inquiry would have been impossible:  
your optimism, imagination, faith, intellect and love  
inspire and sustain me.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was made possible by the incredible, intellectual atmosphere of inquiry in Curriculum and Instruction at LSU, in the Curriculum Theory Project, developed and promoted by Drs. William Pinar and William E. Doll, Jr. In this academically rich, challenging, stimulating, and welcoming environment, I took up the invitation, graciously extended, to partake. I am so glad I did. I thank all those whose support and encouragement I received in small ways every day I attended classes or went to the library, faculty members, especially David Kirshner and Nina Asher, and C&I clerical staff, the fabulous sisters, Lois and Joyce. In the successful completion of this project, yes, but also in living in the south, and learning about myself and others, I have been aided or inspired by the following people whose particular contributions I wish to acknowledge.

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more: surrogate daughter, unending source of local knowledge, junket tour-guide, willing and wonderful companion. Among this talented and hard-working group, I stand in awe, Brian Casemore, of your artful cultural scholarship, your insightful, sensitive, talented articulation of identity. Peggy McConnell, good friend, native New Orleanian, guide to New Orleans culture and history, poetic writer *extraordinaire*, a literary award awaits you. Please write.

Kathy Dale, our daily emails, virtual morning coffee-ing, add depth to my vision—a binocular perspective—with encouragement, humor, and love.

My sister Valerie whose confidence in my ability is unwavering and whose prayers make all things possible.

I carry with me the memory of my father, Charles Trueit, with a grade 10 education, reading law to deepen his understanding of police work: your intellectual struggles, Dad, did not go unnoticed. My persistence and determination in questing—the hunt—are due to you.

My mother Helen Trueit, children Jennifer Barber, Sarah Barber, and Luke Barber, and granddaughter, Maeve Carlin, nurtured and sustained me with their love and encouragement: your absent presence spurred me to completion. This project was larger, more enduring and much more demanding that I could imagine—certainly more than I told you it would be. I hope you will share my monumental sense of achievement and feelings of joy, as well as relief, at its completion.

To the unbelievable Bill Doll, whose generosity defies description, you have opened a whole new world me and I am delighted to share it with you.

To you all, my deepest gratitude.

## PREFACE

The visible is set in the invisible; and in the end what is unseen decides what happens in the seen; the tangible rests precariously upon the untouched and ungrasped.

John Dewey<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation began as an attempt to theorize “conversation,” based on my experiences of learning, intuitively understanding conversation as a necessary element of my learning. I planned to build upon a chapter written for my Masters thesis entitled, “Conversation as a Mode of Research” (Trueit, 1996), elucidating what conversation is and how it works. I was further encouraged in this project when I found William F. Pinar’s (et al., 1995) reference to the field of curriculum as a “complicated conversation.” Seeking to narrow the topic, I was surprised and inspired by neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty’s (1979, 360) inference that conversation is poetic. This was, I thought, an odd claim when I first read it. I associated “poetic” with poetry, being imaginative, speaking metaphorically. I was aware that Walter Ong (1982), a medievalist, explicates the poetic aspects of speech in primarily oral communities: those Euro-Western communities prior to the printing press, where presence, situation and the oral/aural—rhythm, rhyme, flow of words—were important for understanding. From Ong’s perspective, conversation as oral discourse has a strong element of the poetic in it. This view seems to me true, but too simple. Rorty (1989) has more in mind about the poetic when he claims that the poet is “the maker of new words, the shaper of new languages, [and] the vanguard of the species” (20). Rorty describes poets as those who “rebel more strongly against the fear of death than other men and women do” (24). Rorty considers Proust, Nabokov, Newton, Darwin, Hegel, and Heidegger all to be poets because “such

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<sup>1</sup> *Experience and Nature*, 1958.

people are...thought of as rebelling against death—that is, against the failure to have created” (24). Poets are not just wordsmiths, they are creators. The intent of this dissertation is to complexify<sup>2</sup> the poetic that Rorty talks about, to understand this concept in a broader and deeper sense.

In reading Rorty’s later works, especially *Philosophy and Social Hope* (1999), I found he did indeed mean more. Rorty sees conversation as the discourse by which we envision the future, the discourse which gives us the new metaphors we need *to think beyond modernity* and its confines; the discourse upon which rests “intellectual and moral progress,” the discourse which gives us “an increase in imaginative power” whereby we can “make the human future richer than the human past” (87). These are vast claims, perhaps too vast, but in aligning conversation with imagination—thought itself—intellectual and moral progress, Rorty is putting forth his notion of progressivism and the social hope he finds there. I find this notion of conversation aligned with social hope inspiring, if overwhelming, as I think about education and the development of a new perspective on it.

The phrase, thinking “beyond modernity,” is one I borrow from Cornel West (1993). William Doll (1993, 2002, 2005)<sup>3</sup> explains “modern” and “modernity” as both a time period and a form of thought. Doll (1993) quotes David Griffin who refers to the straightjacket of modern thinking, that which began in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and/or the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Doll characterizes modern

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<sup>2</sup> The use of the word “complexify” here, and in my title, alludes to the connections I make to complexity theory. “To complexify” is to recognize *differentiation*, acknowledging “an increase in the intricacy of inter-relations,” with an implication of mysticism, “greatly assisted by the hand of life” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, online version). Complexity theory recognizes reductionism as an error characteristic of modern rationalism and plays with the generative possibilities of *difference*. For more on complexity theory, see Doll (et al., 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Much of the theoretical work in this dissertation is influenced by, and has developed through, my relationship with William E. Doll, Jr., who is my teacher, husband, colleague, and best friend.

thought, in part, as a cosmology reduced to mathematical and mechanistic principles, indicating the supremacy of (Cartesian, Euclidean) “right reason,” a subject/object split that has led to the hierarchical ordering of “reality”; universal and eternal laws pointing to certainty; inquiry directed at ascertaining causality, predictability, and control—in a linear fashion; a universe that can be broken down into atomistic units, that can be known, named, categorized, and ordered. As I explain further in Chapter 1, modern thought, is also called rationalism (Timothy Reiss, 1982) or rationality (William James). As Michel Foucault points out, to be irrational in modern society, is to be undisciplined, that is, not fitting the norm of thought. Reiss claims that rationalism is a form of thought, the dominant form of thought in modernity. My inquiry concerns the possibility of *thinking beyond rationalism*. I suggest that rationalism is a mimetic form of thought. While not discarding the necessity of reason, or the role of *mimesis*, I suggest that *poietic* thought—a complex process of creating, imagining—may be the discursive tool to help us move beyond the confines of modernity. The topic of “conversation” provides a backdrop against which *Complexifying the Poetic: Toward a Poiesis of Curriculum* is foregrounded. This inquiry is an exploration of the poetic (particularly in its *poietic* form) and the implications which can come forward in relation to curriculum: a *poietic* curriculum.

Until the LSU doctoral program in curriculum studies offered me this unequalled opportunity for free inquiry, I took for granted much of the world around me, not in an uninterested way; I was curious to learn, I was a feminist, I was a critical theory student and I was learning well. Between quantitative and qualitative research methods, I would choose “qualitative.” Life was tidy.

The course work that led up to my General Examination initiated a shift in my thinking, however, and the clear boundaries that marked not only how I conceived the world, but myself, as well, began to blur. Reading and researching for this dissertation has taken me to another level in the disordering of that certainty with which I was so comfortable. I have taken the opportunity to learn more about the way logic is embedded in language and its grammar; how thought and interpretations of experience are shaped by language; how values and projects of modernity related to humanism, politics, and ethics might be re-conceived; how one might develop modes of inquiry that might sit outside a modern tradition. As a result, conceptually, the writing of this dissertation, was, and is, its own challenge.

The methodology that justifies this inquiry is lengthy; in it, I critique rationalism and show how a pragmatist approach to inquiry shifts the discourse, addressing the problematic “logic of domination” that Rorty claims constrains inquiry. In this shift, pragmatism enhances rather than abandons reason. My attempt is to imagine how to be “not modern”; to speculate on how imagination aids creativity and enhances emergence of the *new*; to articulate the relationship of imagination to conceptions of *self*; and finally, to suggest ways for developing curriculum that takes seriously the lofty goal of education in preference to schooling. I mark this shift as the difference between *poiesis* (to create, to make, to do) and *mimesis* (copy, imitate, representation), a difference that reveals itself to be significant in complexifying the poetic.

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## ABSTRACT

Inspired by philosopher Richard Rorty's assertion that we need poetic imagination to move beyond modernity, this pragmatist inquiry seeks to understand the poetic, not as it is rationally defined, but rather as a historically situated discursive practice. In western cultures modernist discursive practices are characterized by rationalist reasoning. Traced to Aristotelian re-interpretations of *mimesis* (*this is that*), which structure modernist forms of representation, *mimesis* operates on a principle of equivalency between the specific and the universal, based on Euclidean, geometric reasoning. Likewise, *mimesis* underlies poetic representation as an imaginative expression of an objective reality, ideally, a form that moves one to think in universal terms.

Obscured from a modernist view of the poetic is a prior pre-Socratic *mimesis*, in which are embedded the concepts of *poiesis* (to create, to make, to do) and *paideia* (cultural education). *Mimesis* here is linked to poetic "re-presentations" as performances of epic poems. *Poiesis*, etymological root of the word *poetic*, is related to making meaning through interactions with others, with the environment/ cosmos, and reflexively to develop a sense of being-in-relation. Knowledge, in this schema, is fluid, evolving, situated, communal, and is based on patterns.

As a form of reason, pragmatist logic addresses the failure of modern rationalism to theorize the implications of evolution, creativity and entropy; it also questions logical relationships that exist between representation and mathematics, and the metaphysical assumptions underlying them. Pragmatist logic, based on triadic reasoning, draws on *poiesis* as an organizing principle of reason and its representation, and is a bridge to complexity theory. Findings of this inquiry suggest (1) re-reading progressive educationist John Dewey in

light of *poiesis*, rather than modernist or Aristotelian views of the poetic; and (2) consideration of a *poiesis* of curriculum, one that emerges as a complex living process, out of guided inquiry, and from the reflections of students on their interactions with their environment, with others, and with the greater world outside the classroom.

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: RATIONAL BEGINNING POINTS**

Hidden in the whole process are personal and social values which only emerge from a tacit state over a lengthy period of time. It is, in other words, easier to come to know what one values through one's writing than to write from our values as rational beginning points.

James B. Macdonald

The above statement by James B. Macdonald (1975b), one of those who inspired the “Reconceptualist” movement of the late twentieth century, is taken out of context, but serves a purpose here, to begin the introduction to this dissertation. The statement is intriguing; I needed to read it several times. I had to work to understand, and even now, I wonder. The fact of my working to understand, having inspired me to make connections, and to go beyond—to imagine, to engage in further study—is the point I am after. Macdonald was known as one who valued poetic writing.

The Macdonald statement is significant, too, because it marks a threshold, one that recognizes “rational” beginning points in curriculum, and another not yet fully articulated point, “tacit.” While the statement marks a “personal/social” or public/private distinction, more significantly, it tells me that for Macdonald beginning at “rational” points is not the same as beginning at “values” points. The rational view is not necessarily his personal view. Implied, here, is the impossibility of articulating personal values from “rational beginning points” (3).

Reading further in this short paper, in *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists* (Pinar, 1975), Macdonald reveals that,

The struggle for personal integration, educational integrity, and social justice go on, necessitating the constant reevaluation of oneself, one's work and one's world—with the hope that whatever creative talent one may possess will lead toward something better that we may all share, each in his own way. (4)

This statement signals Macdonald's passionate interest in negotiating complicated passages between what he calls the "human condition" and the "larger condition"; but also his desire to create, to lead education toward "something better"— something more. Macdonald agrees with John Dewey's comment that "educational philosophy was the essence of all philosophy because it was 'the study of how to have a world'" (12). This kind of study needs imagination, a form of thought that is creative, sometimes called poetic thought.

Macdonald was writing at the beginning of a new era in American curriculum theorizing, the Reconceptualist Movement, a humanizing of at least part of the field of curriculum studies. His optimism at this point is inspiring because, unfortunately, recent trends in educational reform seem to be focused not on creating something "more," but rather on getting "back to basics," as in the *No Child Left Behind* reforms. For me this language signals another return to a "representational epistemology" where "knowledge 'stands for' or represents a world that is separate" (Osberg and Biesta, 2003).<sup>1</sup> I call this a mimetic curriculum, arising from, and reinforced by rationalist discursive practices (Chapter 2). The "back and forth" of reforms in education seem to indicate that we never get it right; as I survey the literature and study

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<sup>1</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell (1994), in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, reconceptualizes *representation*, and invites the reader to consider: "Suppose we thought of representation, not as a homogenous field or grid of relationships, governed by a single [mimetic] principle but as a multi-dimensional and heterogeneous terrain, a collage or patchwork quilt assembled over time out of fragments. Suppose further that this quilt was torn, folded, wrinkled, covered with accidental stains, traces of the bodies it has enfolded. This model might help us understand a number of things about representation" (419). I refer again to Mitchell in regard to Tetsuo Aoki's use of metonymy to disrupt modernist representation in Chapter 5.

curriculum, I find that many of the issues of reform in the past 120 years, involve what is broadly termed progressive<sup>2</sup> reform and a more conservative “basics” approach to which we always seem to “return.” These two approaches involve very different ways of thinking about curriculum. As Dennis Carlson (2002) points out, “progressivism is about learning to think and act in new ways, to leave the safe harbors of the mythologies we have grown comfortable and secure with, and to re-script and re-work mythologies and narratives in ways that open up democratic possibilities for the development of self and culture” (3). He asks how it is that we may move from the security of the safe harbor to the “postmodern,” with its “uncertainty and unpredictability,” “chaos and loss of meaning.”<sup>3</sup>

In narrowing the focus of this work, but also in providing some context for situating it in the field of curriculum studies and making connections to “the poetic,” I begin by drawing from Lawrence Cremin’s (1975) history of early curriculum organization in America.<sup>4</sup> Cremin begins with William Torrey Harris, acknowledging that he was one among many post-Civil War schoolmen who developed curricula (in the 1870s) for the “intractable problem of universal schooling in an increasingly urban society, namely the *rationalizing* of the school system along *bureaucratic and industrial* lines” (20; emphasis added). Harris (quoted in Cremin) states that the only defensible course of studies is one that “takes up *in order* the conventionalities of

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<sup>2</sup> The term “progressive” is convenient here, but problematic as Herbert Kliebard (1995) points out. Here I use the term to refer to progressive reform in the pragmatist style of John Dewey and Jane Addams.

<sup>3</sup> Carlson argues throughout his book that a “new progressivism is emerging out of the dialectic between modern and postmodern discourse and narratives, in the borderlands where the hybrid subject is continuously engaged in critical reflection, and in the creative play of diverse cultural forms and identity categories” (6). It is the dynamic of “creative play” that interests me and for which I find chaos and complexity theory useful tools of imagination.

<sup>4</sup> Other excellent histories of the mechanistic metaphors that orient education are found in Doll (1993, 2002, 2005), and Doug McKnight (2003).

intelligence”; Cremin explains that the two great provinces of thought, for Harris, were nature and spirit, which were to be developed through the curriculum—that is, courses of study laid out by Harris. The “*instrument* of the process would be the textbook” (Cremin, 22; emphasis added). As Cremin notes, the analytical paradigm for Harris’ curriculum went unchallenged for the next 50 years:

There is the learner, self-active and self-willed by virtue of his humanity and thus self-propelled into the educative process; there is the course of study, organized by responsible adults with appropriate concern for priority, sequence, and scope; there are materials of instruction which particularize the course of study; there is the teacher who encourages and mediates the process of instruction; there are the examinations which appraise it; and there is the organizational structure within which it proceeds and within which large numbers of individuals are enabled simultaneously to enjoy its benefits. (22)

This was, indeed, the rationalizing of curriculum. An efficient, universal delivery system to universalized learners: textbook facts, scheduling and supervision administered, secured with belief in the joy that accompanies such rationalizing, harkening back to Peter Ramus and John Amos Comenius (Doll, 2005). It was Harris’s model for education from primary school through college. Later (Chapter 2), I will elaborate on rationalism as a modern episteme, but here, the point is there is no place in this rational frame for questioning, reflection, or creative process, unheard of until the Progressive Era, and later in the reform efforts of 1950s and 1960s (Cremin, 26). Early Progressive Era pragmatists of influence, John Dewey, Jane Addams, and Ella Flagg Young set the tone for humanizing curriculum by aspiring to make curriculum engage the lives of students. Humanizing curriculum started with the lives of students, attending to the skills and competencies they needed to participate in their communities, and advancing their abilities. Later curricularists, “conceptual empiricists” including “behaviorists” (Pinar, 1975, x), missed the

existential/participatory point that Dewey made. Their efforts were directed at designing “syllabi and instructional materials designed to introduce students as engagingly and efficiently as possible to the leading concepts and methods of the field” (Cremin, 1975, 26–27). This was not progressive education as Dewey envisioned it.<sup>5</sup>

This dissertation reiterates James Macdonald’s voiced concern regarding “rational beginning points,” rather than lived ones; it stands as a critique of modernist rationality as it explores how the “new” in “reconceptualization” might be created. Pinar (1975) describes the project of the post-critical reconceptualists as being concerned with the “creation of the new” (Preface, xi). In this dissertation, I am arguing that such creation is inherent in a *poietic* curriculum.<sup>6</sup>

When Richard Rorty comments that we need poetic discourse (1979, 1999), he, too, is suggesting that we move beyond the present rational discourse. Rorty, in fact, does not usually refer to “rationalism”; he prefers to critique an “onto-theological metaphysical” vocabulary (a

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<sup>5</sup> As Kliebard (1992) and Cremin (1961) both explain, progressive reforms have taken place many times in the past century, each seemingly an improvement on the past. “Progressive” change in education is often associated with Dewey; however many of the reforms, while they are designed to make progress in some way, have little to do with Dewey or his ideas about education. Pragmatist approaches to education are a faint voice of opposition to the dominating traditional discourse in education.

<sup>6</sup> “Creativity” in curriculum is not a new concept. John Dewey and Jane Addams encouraged teaching through art. In the 1950s Benjamin Bloom (1956), as part of the behavioral scientists’ “humanizing” of curriculum, brought “creativity” into his taxonomy of educational objectives. *Creativity* is there linked with critical thinking and problem-solving. Creativity in this sense is related to finding solutions to problems by using “thinking skills.” Bloom’s use of the word “creative” here serves as an example of how words or concepts are pulled into a rational frame to create a new — a-historical, a-contextual — standard of meaning for a word; a “new” concept that fits a behaviorally testable construction. In this sense, “creativity” is technologized, consisting of a skill set, which fits within a *mimetic* curriculum frame. Skills are practiced, in imitation, over and over again, until a level of achievement is reached. E. Paul Torrance, in educational psychology, designed a test (1966) to evaluate creativity in two dimensions (verbal and figural), creating the now commonly recognized category of “gifted and talented.” Continuing that work, and expanding upon it, Jane Piirto (1998, 2004) looks at *Understanding Creativity*.

phrase he borrows from Martin Heidegger), which he also refers to as “Platonism and Cartesianism”:

“Platonism” in the sense in which I use the term does not denote the (very complex, shifting, dubiously consistent) thoughts of the genius who wrote the Dialogues. Instead, it refers to a set of philosophical distinctions (appearance/reality, matter/mind, made/found, sensible/intellectual, etc.): what Dewey called “a brood and nest of dualisms.” These dualisms dominate the history of Western philosophy, and can be traced back to one or another of Plato’s writings. (1999, xii)

For Rorty, modern discourse, that which has evolved since the seventeenth century, is embedded with Greek metaphysical and Christian theological values; these values permeate Western culture, perpetuate particular ways of thinking, and determine the truth-value or certainty of thought. These values are the foundations of modern philosophy. Drawing on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s descriptive and demystifying terminology in regard to language, Rorty refers to such Platonist (Greek metaphysical) and Cartesian (Christian theological) values as a vocabulary. Wittgenstein uses the terms “vocabulary,” “tools,” and “language games” to convey that language should be thought of as a useful device rather than a transparent, benign, medium through which meaning is conveyed. Rorty comments that the vocabulary of the past may have been adequate for its purposes, but is no longer sufficient. He suggests that we need new metaphors; we need to imagine new ways of speaking to move us toward a better future.

Rorty’s anti-metaphysical views, particularly those regarding language, progress and method, situate him as a neo-pragmatist.<sup>7</sup> This dissertation will neither analyze nor critique

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<sup>7</sup> As Rorty explains the difference, neo-pragmatists have taken the linguistic turn, picking up the topic of “language” and dropping the topics of “experience” and “moral and social philosophy” (1999, 24–25).

Rorty's philosophical position, *per se*, but will draw on a pragmatist/neo-pragmatist perspective to elucidate the poetic.

### SITUATING AND CONTEXTUALIZING THE QUESTIONS

In situating my inquiry, I take my lead from Rorty,<sup>8</sup> who suggests that the way questions are asked may situate them as “modern” questions, intended to get at a-historical, a-contextual answers. “What is...” questions lead to definitive answers, even from a historical perspective, isolating the phenomenon from the context of the situation in which it evolved, indicating that both the form and the intent of the question are shaped by cultural hegemony. Further, as M. Jayne Fleener (1999) explains, even the interpretations of research findings are subject to a “logic of domination,”<sup>9</sup> so rooted in our modern world that we have come to accept [dominating] “hierarchies of relationships as necessary and even fundamental to being and knowing” (8). This hierarchical logic defines how we make sense of our world and is embedded in the very language we speak.

Fleener recommends we focus on “why” questions (rather than “what is...” questions), an approach that does not seek foundational or definitive answers, but explores meanings in the past and present “within a *matrix* of social meaning systems” (8–9; emphasis added). The heuristic of a matrix is helpful in eluding the trap of a-contextual, a-historical thinking. A matrix

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<sup>8</sup> Rorty does not identify himself as a post-modernist, although much of his scholarship supports post-modern theory. Rorty does call for moving beyond modernity, for using a new vocabulary, for creating new tools to envision a better future.

<sup>9</sup> “Logic of domination” is the term eco-feminist Karen Warren (1997) uses to describe the “oppressive conceptual framework” of modernism. The phrase is not used in the sense of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, but refers rather to “a structure of argumentation which leads to a justification of subordination” (Fleener, 1999), and as Fleener (2005) later remarks, “The logic of domination is intrinsic to the scientific paradigm and the mathematization of reality” (8).

is a “situation or set of circumstances that allows or encourages the origin, development, or growth of something” (OED).<sup>10</sup> Archaically, it is “the womb,” appropriate to this dissertation for the way that systems (like the fetus, placenta/uterus, mother) are nested, connected, and growing in relation. Tracing and describing such intertwined meaning, over time, presents a complicated enough challenge, but that challenge is doubled in consideration that the meaning we ascribe to events and circumstances is historically and culturally determined. The poetic is a form of thought, inseparable from a human “being,” as well as a form of representation. This complex bundle of self, thought, and representation is intertwined with the poetic. This same self-thought-representation bundle circulates, in many different forms, around philosophical questions in the present as it did around metaphysical questions of the past. Seen *poietically*, this triad yields insights into new ways of organization not found in contemporary discourses. As Reiss (1982) notes, it is a “nonconceptualized order,” one that does not seek to separate concept and object (46).

## **RESEARCH FOCI**

This research investigates: (1) the “poetic,” and its relation to modern rationalism; (2) the *poietic* with its relation to the poetic; and (3) implications of the *poietic* for curriculum, particularly from a pragmatist and complexity theory perspective.

Why “poetic”? The poetic is a form of representation, often contrasted with “rational” forms of discourse. Poetic(al) means “(1) relating to, typical of, or in the form of poetry; (2) having qualities usually associated with poetry, especially in being gracefully expressive,

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<sup>10</sup> OED: *Oxford English Dictionary*; all references are to the online version, LSU Libraries, Indexes and Databases.

romantically beautiful, or elevated and uplifting; (3) characteristic of a poet, especially in possessing unusual sensitivity or insight or in being able to express things in a beautiful or romantic way” (OED). Inspired by Rorty’s claims about the “poetic,”<sup>11</sup> this inquiry traces historically and explores contextually, the meaning of the word at various bifurcation points related to education, more specifically, to curriculum. From the time of the late Humanist (and Protestant) Reform Movement to the current day, education as the representation of knowledge has tended to a linearly structured curriculum. Here education as “imitation” (*mimesis*), based on “Platonist” views is a copying act (Doll, 2005). Examples of the “logical” and mimetic approach to curriculum and instruction continue to exist in today’s approach to lectures, exercises, discipline, drills, sequencing. I believe it is fair to say that even today concepts of curriculum, and the way it is delivered, can be called *mimetic*, due to a reliance on representational epistemology (Osberg 2003, 2004). The curriculum in this case is the subject content that students need to learn, and they are evaluated on how well they respond on examinations.

Renaissance and Humanist ideas about “representation” were based on a simple translation of *mimesis* (representation), from the Latin, as “imitation” or “copy,” not on the earlier Greek meaning of the word. An etymological and historical exploration of “poetic,” reveals differing meanings-in-use, pre- and post-Socrates. It is a slippery concept. *Mimesis* is always about representation. In its pre-Socratic, poetic form it is related to one form of thought,

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Rorty, in making this claim, draws on Michael Oakeshott’s (1962) essay, “The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind,” in which Oakeshott suggests the poetic voice is one of three needed to inform thought (poetic, scientific and practical), rather than the overly dominant voice of argumentative discourse, “the voice of science” (197). Therefore, says Oakeshott, we need *conversation* rather than argumentation so that all voices may be heard.

expressed as a verb: “to create, to make, to do”—*poiesis*. After Plato, however, *mimesis* is transformed: it is a noun, meaning “imitation,” “copy.” This dichotomous split has repressed the value of the concept of the poetic in a rationalist culture. Today the “poetic” remains an intellectually, academically devalued discourse—not “scientific”; therefore, not a source of true knowledge. What kind of magic, then, is Rorty’s idea of the poetic that it might enable us to move beyond modernity? In my search for meanings of the word “poetic,” beyond our contemporary and most modernist frame, I come to my second question.

What is *poiesis*? The etymological root of “poetic” is *poiesis* (to create, to make, to do), an action word, denoting a process—also related to education (*paideia*) through the concept of *mimesis*.<sup>12</sup> Traced to its pre-Socratic roots, “poetic” leads to *poiesis*. Here (re-) presentation (*mimesis*) meant re-enactment related to the performance of Homeric epic poetry. Following this pre-Socratic lead, my dissertation will develop the notion of *poiesis*, and *poietic* episteme. From our current perspective, i.e., modes of thought, or vocabularies, such a creating is nearly incomprehensible. *Poiesis*, understood from a process perspective, is perhaps best described in

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<sup>12</sup> In recent years the word “paideia” related to education was used by Mortimer Adler, at the University of Chicago, who founded the Paideia Program, a school curriculum centered around guided reading and discussion of difficult works (as judged for each grade). “Paideia is a dynamic approach to restructuring schools to foster more active learning and a better use of teacher and student time.” Adler’s curriculum stresses identification of key ideas, development of basic skills, and recall of significant facts. He fought progressive education’s child-centered curriculum and vocation-centered training. He championed general education in the classics, where universal moral truths could be found in the works of Plato and Aristotle: “the great ideas from great books.” Retrieved from the internet: <http://radicalacademy.com/homepage.htm>; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortimer\\_Adler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortimer_Adler) (Oct, 2005). Adler’s ideas are criticized because such an education pays too much attention to the works of great (white) men, and too little to women, people of color, and other minorities. A classical education has the tendency to reproduce existing (hierarchical) structures in society.

terms of complexity: the language of self-organizing, non-linear dynamical systems, which offers a way to critique current curriculum thought and to re-think curricular relationships. As my inquiry will reveal, *poiesis* is a powerful concept, associated with creating, with difference, and with the emergence of the new—obviously, the inverse of ideas associated with a later (Roman) interpretation of *mimesis*, that of simple copying, of simple, visual representation, of what Peter Ramus laid out in the latter sixteenth century (Doll, 2005; Triche, 2002; Triche and McKnight, 2004).

My intent is not to disregard *mimesis*—far from it—but to understand more about the role of education and the process of curriculum by investigating representation (*mimesis*) in curriculum, and how the interpretation currently used fits within the modern episteme. My third question is, therefore, “How is a *poietic* curriculum different than a mimetic curriculum?” What practical difference can it make to reconceive curriculum, thought, representation, and even, the “self” in *poietic* terms? In describing the *poietic*, to speculate on the process of creating, to theorize the difference, to think other than in modernist, representational terms, I draw upon themes from complexity theory, the semeiotic logic of C. S. Peirce, and Gregory Bateson’s idea of “difference that makes a difference.”<sup>13</sup> Specifically, I would like this work to lend support to recognizing the generativity of differences, to address the inadequacies, paradoxes and ironies of modernist thought, and recognize the possibilities inherent in the vocabulary of complexity theory, i.e., self-organizing (or emergent), dynamical systems. Ideally, one will appreciate, in this proffered hypothesis, conceptions of self, representation, and thought (reason, logic) that have

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<sup>13</sup> Neither Peirce or Bateson is considered a “complexity theorist”; however, each is considered to have laid the groundwork for those who are, and so might be thought of as grandfathers to this newly emerging field.

rendered the enactment of democratic education such a challenge, and the hope-filled reasons for reconceiving a post-humanist self, a play-filled logic, and a *poietic* representation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A lengthy discussion of method and methodological concerns is presented in Chapter 2, providing the rationale for a pragmatist approach to inquiry. In the first and second part of this chapter, I identify “methods” as a technology of rationalism, historicize rationalism as the dominant discourse (drawing on Timothy Reiss, 1982), and demonstrate the inadequacies of *this* discursive practice. Such a discussion demonstrates how a modern *episteme* functions, in part through its methods, to (re)define concepts in a rationalist mode, thereby maintaining itself as a “dominant discourse.” In this mode, the poetic is defined by, and in relation to, rational discourse. Consequently, I find research practices based on such a conceptual framework inadequate for the task of understanding the poetic. In this section, drawing on Reiss, I find a vocabulary for discussing the poetic as its own particular class of discursive practice, that is, a particular form of reasoning: a “visible and describable” “organization of signs” called *thinking* (Reiss, 9).

In the third part of the chapter, I outline how pragmatist thought originated as an effort to address the perceived inadequacies of *rationalism*, without sacrificing *reason*. Pragmatism eschews “method,” utilizing instead, inquiry that acknowledges how the cultural production of knowledge is historically situated, and arises from and directly affects individual experience and interpretation. A pragmatist approach to inquiry attends to the role of experience in discursive

practices, sees discourse not as a benign medium of expression but as a tool that can be—and is—used for a purpose.

This approach to methodology is in keeping with William Pinar’s (2004) suggestion that subjectively existing individuals<sup>14</sup> in today’s society can benefit from an interdisciplinary academic knowledge derived from a “new form of contemporary... research” (7). He proposes a form of research that produces an inter-disciplinary, historical panorama, seeing the present historical moment in light of the past, for the purpose of reconfigur[ing] the intellectual content of the curriculum. Toward this end, in this chapter, I situate and describe the “present” *rationalist* discourse, the conceptual framework of the dominant, Western, North American form of representation that has contributed to conceptions of a standardized and representationalist curriculum. In subsequent chapters, I explore the poetic historically as a discursive practice, focusing on the “organism/word/environment” nexus—particularly how that relationship functions discursively to shape individuals.

The methodological concerns of this dissertation are fundamental, not only to the way this inquiry is conceived and presented, but also to understanding the limitations of modern rationality and possibly, moving beyond it— which Richard Rorty claims, requires poetic imagination. In other historical times, and even today in some cultures, poetic discourse performs this function. Investigation into the poetic, to gain insights into discourse and its relationship to

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<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault (1982) is often credited with calling attention to *subjectivities*, historically tracing the organization of modern societies and increasing levels of bureaucracies which create and reinforce normativity through individuality. About subjectivities, Foucault says, a human being is made a “subject” through objectification, “divided either within himself or from others, categorized, *given* both a social and a personal identity” (208). One aspect of Foucault’s scholarly work is to historicize such conceptual categorizations; for example, we talk of *the poor*, *the sick*, *the insane*, *the criminal*.

conceptions of self and culture (organism/word/environment), demands an approach that will reveal the poetic in *poietic* terms.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of selected literature addresses the primary topic of the dissertation, namely the limitations of modern rationalist discourse and its mimetic curriculum, the possibilities of there being something “more” (a *poietic* frame) and the implications for reconceiving curriculum from complexly creative perspective. In this section I include a survey of the literature upon which I have drawn related to modern rationality, the poetic, *poiesis* and pragmatism. I then situate my topic of inquiry in the field of curriculum studies, identifying an ancestry of others who have considered the poetic, in some way, an important aspect of curriculum.

Since pragmatist thought was developed to counter modern rationality and its discourse, I begin in Chapter 1 (Methodology: A Pragmatist Approach to Inquiry) by drawing on Timothy Reiss (1982) to characterize aspects of rationality, modernity and its discourse, and the modern episteme (23).<sup>15</sup>

Pragmatist thought is, then, characterized first by the way that it finds rational thought inadequate, and secondly, by the ways that pragmatism distinguishes itself. My characterization, for the specific purpose of outlining a pragmatist mode of inquiry, draws heavily on readings of

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<sup>15</sup> Reiss (1982) is careful to explain that the word *episteme* is a “useful shorthand” (though not an over-simplification) to refer to a “process of development and of meaningful articulation; a *way of knowing* a particular order of reality—not simply the ‘object’ of such knowledge.” He further explains, “the obvious diversity and complexity of the thousand-year-long “Middle Ages” need not prevent us from *understanding* them as an epistemic totality” (23, fn).

Charles Sanders Peirce and Cornel West, but refers to William James, John Dewey, Jane Addams, and of course, to Rorty himself.

One aspect of Rorty's neo-pragmatism, an essential point in this project, is his emphasis of the inseparability of elements that form an "organism/ word/environment" nexus (1996, 1999). This triadic cluster is often conceived of as elements of "self, representation, society," but as separate elements or components that interact with each other.<sup>16</sup> When Rorty refers to this nexus "organism/word/environment," he sees them as dynamically construed— more than "integrated"—not as separate elements that sit in relation to one another, or even interacting with one another.

Rorty, by calling attention to the inextricable inter-formation of the elements of organism, word, and environment makes it possible to see the relationship among subjectivity, objectivity and representation as a logically and discursively created problem, part of a pattern that permeates Euro-Western cultures, at all levels, in various ways, as the relation between the one and the many. As William James (1907/1995) comments, the rationality of modern thought creates this relationship between individuals, community, and culture (49–62). Understanding the relationship between individuals, community and culture differently; re-configuring that relationship, is part of the pragmatist's task discussed in Chapter 2. In the following chapters I use the "organism/word/environment" construal to understand the complicated interrelationships over time.

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<sup>16</sup> Many critiques of modern rationalism, including feminist, post-colonial, poststructural and critical theorist, struggle with these three elements in relation to each other. Just how these words are conceived and relate to each other becomes one of the fundamental questions of philosophy, as the issues involved are the discursive constructions "self," mind, self–other relations.

A *poietic* episteme is developed in Chapter 4. The difficulty of understanding a mytho-poetic culture, as Reiss points out, is that we in the present are so steeped in rationalist thought, that we can hardly imagine otherwise; when we think about “poetic” we do so from a modernist perspective. I suggest, however, an adequate understanding of the differences between a mytho-poetic culture and a modern one can be developed and note that Reiss, himself, presents an excellent impression of these differences. In addition, I draw on Margaret Drewal’s (1992) development of *poiesis* in performance from a multi-disciplinary perspective involving a paradigmatic shift from structure to process; from the normative to the particular and historically situated, from the eternal to the time-centered, and from the collective to the agency of individuals.<sup>17</sup> In her work, Drewal refers to Henry Louis Gates’ (1988) *The Signifying Monkey*, regarding the play of signification in oral cultures. In curriculum studies, Walter Gershon (2004) develops Drewal’s ideas in regard to teacher education.

To develop the differences between the Homeric poetic—which I refer to as *poiesis*—and the simplistic Renaissance interpretation of the poetic, I borrow from Timothy Reiss’s development of a modern episteme, and work to elaborate a *poietic* episteme. In doing so, I will draw on literature from several disciplines: to understand the nuances of Greek language as it functioned in Homeric times, particularly in the performance of poems, I use Gregory Nagy (1990, 1996a, 1996b) along Richard P. Martin (1989) in cultural anthropology, linguistics and Hellenic studies; to understand the concept of *poiesis* in Greek philosophy, H. D. F. Kitto (1966)

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<sup>17</sup> This approach is used by Margaret Drewal (1992) in her study, *Yoruba rituals: Performers, play and agency*, to uncover and to understand from the perspective of oral cultures, the role and purpose of the ritual enactment of myths.

and Jeffrey Walker (2000) in classical studies; for an understanding of representation as *mimesis* I refer to Leon Golden (1992) and Martin Heidegger (1968) for the views on Aristotle and Plato, respectively. Regarding the history of the use of the word *poiesis*, I draw on Nathan Greenberg (1961) in philology; for a sense of “imagination” and the social function of Greek literature, Paulo Vivante (1983) and George Walshe (1984) in literary theory; to understand the art of oral performance, Richard Bauman (1986) in performance theory. An excellent explanation of the *mimesis* of Aristotle and Plato is developed by Leon Golden (1992). To conceive of forms of thought beyond a modern episteme, either pre- or post-modern, I refer to Clifford Geertz (1980), N. Katherine Hayles (1994, 1999), Zygmunt Bauman (1993), Gregory Bateson (1958), David Bogen (1999) and Donna Haraway (2000). In consideration of the orality of Homeric times and the significance of primary orality for thought, I draw on Margaret Drewal (1992), Henry Louis Gates (1988), and Walter Ong (1982).

Looking at the Renaissance as a bifurcation point and a turn away from the poetic, in the field of curriculum studies I refer to David Hamilton (2002), William Doll (et al., 2005), and Stephen Triche and Doug McKnight (2004). Beyond curriculum studies, related to historical, literary and cultural studies, and the history of ideas particularly related to language, I refer to Mikhail Bakhtin (1984a, 1984b, 1986), Martin Heidegger (2000), David Halliburton (1981), and Timothy Reiss (1982). To understand a difference between an individual and the concept of *self*, as it emerged in the French Renaissance of 1050–1200, I refer to Colin Morris (1972); for a sense of *self* (character) in ancient Greek poetic tradition, Seth Schein (1984, 1996) and Graham

Zanker (1994, 2004). For the history of scientific thought in Greece, I refer to G. E. R. Lloyd (1999).

In American education, two influential figures served in the later nineteenth century to establish a mimetic, representationalist approach to curriculum, reinforcing rationalist ideas of modernity, Charles Eliot, President of Harvard College (1869–1909), and William Torrey Harris, Superintendent of the St. Louis School Board and later US Commissioner of Education. Despite opposition, despite reforms, a modernist approach to curriculum continues to dominate. In the history of American curriculum and education, I read Lawrence Cremin (1961, 1975), William Doll (2002, 2005), Herbert Kliebard (1992), Petra Munro (1998, 1999), William Pinar (1975, 2004) and Pinar (et al., 1995).

What seems common to those who write about the poetic in curriculum now is a desire for something that is both more and different, that provides not only imaginative vision, but an existential “being” and “doing,” for whom “the de-spiritualized is brought to life” (Quinn, 2001, 191). For example, David Hansen (2004) states, at the beginning of his article entitled “A Poetics of Teaching,” that the idea of a poetics “contributes to a holistic view of the work... by regarding teaching as more than merely a sum of its occupational parts” (119).

James Garrison (1997) describes John Dewey’s sense of imagination as “poetry, in the classical Greek sense of *poiesis*, or calling into existence” (8). Garrison maintains that Dewey’s aesthetics of “imaginative vision” is “the center of Dewey’s thinking” (1). A crucial difference between mimetic and *poietic* educational thought is marked by these phrases, ones that call us to ask: What is education for? Contemplating this question, one realizes that “poetic happenings”

(Huebner, 1999) and “calling truth into existence” (Garrison, 1997) are not phrases that teachers caught in a mimetic mode might use to describe their work.

I trace the ancestral heritage of my inquiry into curriculum studies to James B. Macdonald (1971a, 1971b, 1975a, 1975b) and Dwayne Huebner (1999). Both were students of Virgil Herrick at the University of Chicago. Herrick was a well-known curricularist, who worked in the field of curriculum development, with his colleague at the University of Chicago, Ralph Tyler. In 1947, the university sponsored The University of Chicago Curriculum Theory Conference, a “benchmark” in the history of the field in a transitional period, one that the social efficiency movement sought to reclaim. School dropout rates were high and opponents of progressivism were hoping to shift the field in their direction. Tyler presented a paper at the conference entitled, “The Organization of Learning Experiences.” It was subsequently a chapter in *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949), the single most influential curriculum text—and still being used. In a brilliant transfer of a modernist interpretation of Dewey’s scientific method, Tyler eased the transition to an efficient and scientific approach to teaching subjects. He provided a model for the efficient organization of learning experiences, simple linear steps— a four-step method that began with learning objectives to be achieved, and ended with the evaluation of achievements; it was universally applicable (Pinar et al., 148–49) and political climates favored its lasting success.

In sharp contrast, at the same conference, Herrick was calling for “analysis of curriculum decisions and curriculum approaches and orientations via examination of their underlying assumptions” (Pinar et al., 148). Herrick’s approach, one of observation and questioning, signals

a different approach to inquiry and a sounder basis for theorizing curriculum. In addition, he wrote, “Our exclusive preoccupation with subject matter gives rise to the danger that we will fall behind in creative, imaginative thinking about different ways in which an educational program can be planned” (Macdonald et al., 1965, 70; Pinar et al., 1995, 172). Herrick’s concern is more for the classroom situation and what occurs there. He used

analysis of classroom episodes, to discover what certain frameworks show about this episode and further, what this exercise will say about the nature and function of frameworks or structures in the whole process of curriculum thinking and theorizing. (in Macdonald et al., 1975,178)

In concluding the “exercise” concerning the problems of curriculum development and the application of models and frameworks, Herrick summarizes students’ presentations by pointing out that: “Our experience seemed to indicate the following generalizations as being important: all of the present structures were incomplete at some point” (183).<sup>18</sup> For Herrick, the incompleteness, might have been the place to start questioning, either the model or what was actually happening in the classroom interactions. His inquiry was not limited to subject matter, but focused on a teaching situation (Pinar et al., 172).

For two of his students, Dwayne Huebner and James B. Macdonald, the “incompleteness” of the frameworks and structures may have signaled the “more-ness” inherent in a classroom situation. Both were bothered by the existing state of education and of curriculum theorizing, influenced by politics and scientism, resulting in stagnant thought, and in apathy—a sign of oppression—in teachers and curricularists alike. Huebner (1999/1975) began one talk to a

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<sup>18</sup> The other points Herrick (1975) brings forward in his conclusions are: (1) the importance of the concept of transactions, (2) the need for value referents, the utility of some kind of structure, and (3) that “a complicated classroom situation will yield impossible mountains of data” (181–83).

group, “Fellow educators: Are we not lost?” in an effort to call attention to their tendency to follow rather than lead—to imitate rather than create (231).

For James Macdonald (1975), the more-ness was related to language and the over-looked context of a situation, blindness to the specific in relation to the general, or the micro- and macro- of situations. Pointing to inter-connectedness of social and intellectual systems was part of Macdonald’s effort to destabilize the techno-rational and scientific hold on curriculum theorizing which deals with universals.

Influenced by Heidegger, Huebner (1999) refers to “poetic” as *poiesis*, in the pre-Socratic sense, finding connections between language, thought, and being-in-the-world as discourse. Integrating thought, language, experience, being and doing, Huebner states: “Conversation [is] a creative act”: creativity is a poetic “happening of truth” (153). The poetic in this sense involves the power of agency. For Huebner, the failure of education is due to “a breakdown in our talk, our poetry, about the world we make” (232). Educators need to have clarity and vision about their public world, which arises through their conversations. He asks, “Why do we not act with courage?” (231).<sup>19</sup>

How will an alternative concept of the poetic influence a “representational epistemology”? For me, a *poietic* vocabulary, perhaps influenced by chaos and complexity theories, allows a radical re-conception of curriculum, one that can have a positive influence in education. There are those who do not share my vision. For example, among the many

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<sup>19</sup> Huebner’s (1999) fiery exhortation to educators in this essay, initially a speech, urges them to take *action* for educational change. “As educators we must be political activists who seek a more just public world. The alternative of course is to be school people—satisfied with the existing social order—the silent majority who embrace conservatism” (238–39).

mythologies of progressivism that Dennis Carlson (2004) brings forward in *Leaving Safe Harbors*, he pays attention to Margaret Wheatley's application of chaos theory to organizations. Wheatley is an organizational theorist, public speaker, and chaos theory popularizer. Carlson worries about chaos theory as it is *applied* to organizations, including educational institutions. He states, "According to Wheatley, chaos theory in the new physics demonstrates an underlying and unifying orderliness, a force that brings order out of chaos" (162). According to Carlson, in representing "an underlying and unifying orderliness," Wheatley suggests that chaos theory represents "how things really happen/occur," because that really *is* the way of nature, organizations will "*naturally*" come to their own creative orderliness—self-organization. Carlson notes correctly that chaos theory is too often another effort to appeal to the mythology that "this is the way nature works" to justify a "scientific" approach (162). He says,

When chaos theory is applied to the organization of educational institutions, it involves a two-tiered borrowing. It borrows a corporate managerial language and methodology that in turn borrows its metaphors and mythic themes from a new postmodern science. This means that in questioning the usefulness of chaos theory in forging a new progressivism, we must question the validity of both of these borrowings. (162)

Carlson's doubts and concerns are appropriate for the references he has chosen.

Unfortunately, these references are limited and outdated. Since the early 1990s, study of complex and chaotic systems has burgeoned, not only in the sciences (Kauffman, 1993, 1995, 2000; Bak, 1996) and social sciences (Bird, 2003; Bogen, 1999), but in literature (Hayles, 1999) and literary theory as well (Iser, 2000). Much of this literature is described in works by Davis (et al., forthcoming); Doll (et al., 2005); Doll and Gough (2002); and Fleener (2002).

In the field of curriculum, chaos and complexity theories hold promise for those who seek to understand representation beyond modernism. Representation from a complex and chaotic systems perspective is “temporal,” ongoing, and increasingly complex (non-reductive). As Osberg and Beista (2003) point out, complex systems (including chaotic systems) are *about* recognizing change, creation of the new, and utilizing chance.

Models and theories that try to reduce the world to a system of rules or laws, cannot be understood as representation of a universe that exists independently of us, but rather, are valuable but temporary tools by means of which we constantly (re)negotiate our world...because the process of finding our way through obstacles does not have an end, rather it results in the exposure of more and different obstacles, and different views of the same obstacle—a creative process...rather than a compromise. (2003, Paper presentation)

On this basis, when Carlson talks about “a new progressivism emerging out of a dialectic...in the borderlands...in the creative play of diverse cultural forms and identity categories” (6) he uses a discourse that harmonizes with complexity theory.

From Carlson’s perspective, the harbor is predictably “safe”; from mine, *safety* is a relative term that obfuscates chance. He is right, leaving the harbor presents a risk; but the journey beyond, fraught with both danger and possibilities, opens one up to a whole new world. This new form of thought holds promise, I believe, for “leaving safe harbors” and may represent a new progressivism, one that shifts discursive practices beyond a modernist episteme.

## CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY: A PRAGMATIST APPROACH TO INQUIRY

### PART ONE: METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

**Method:** (1) a way of doing something according to a plan; (2) orderly thought, action, or technique; (3) the body of systematic techniques used by a particular discipline, especially a scientific one.

**Methodology:** the methods or organizing principles underlying a particular art, science or other area of study; (2) the study of methods of research.

These two definitions from my computer dictionary are common ones.<sup>20</sup> The word “method,” is formed from the Greek roots, meta- and –ode; meta- is a combining form of preposition and –ode is “way, path, travel” (OED).<sup>21</sup> Although the definition of method (above) suggests a definite plan, it was not always so. *Method* begins with the connotation of traveling with, after, or between; journeying the same way, walking the same path, journeying together. For the early Greeks, method, as a “way” was often associated with doing *with* a particular person, someone who knew how to do, demonstrated a skill, and was recognized because that person was successful. Lengthy apprenticeships were based on learning method, which was to learn the art of doing. The art required time, time to be with the master, to learn his thoughts as well as his skills. Method, even since those early times, has been associated with technique; and underlying the technique are various forms of reasoning.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Computer dictionary is *Encarta World English Dictionary*, Microsoft Word X, 1999, s.v. “Method”, “Methodology.”

<sup>21</sup> OED, s.v. “Method.”

<sup>22</sup> Martin Heidegger (1971), in his book entitled *On the Way to Language*, notes that the word “way” “speaks to the reflective mind of man.” He equates “way” in Western languages to “*Tao*, [in Laotse’s poetic thinking] ‘which properly speaking’ means *way*.” These words are translated as “reason, mind, *raison*, meaning, *logos*” (92).

The relationship of method to methodology, as implied in the quotations above, is that methodology is the study of methods, particularly their organizing principles or underlying procedures, the *forms* of thought that organize or shape the method. The form of thought or conceptual framework that underlay Greek method, especially in medicine, was rational (or metaphysical) reasoning. With the development of metaphysical thought, medicine moved beyond the various and sundry attempts to deal with disease: magic, drug peddling, quackery, divination and prayer. G. E. R. Lloyd (1999) maintains that rampant disease presented ample opportunities for many different groups and individuals who professed the ability to heal. It was a lucrative opportunity and competition spurred development in the medical field (19–54).

Amongst the arguing and competing groups of healers, there were those who called themselves “Methodists.” The Methodists were the first self-defined sect of medical healers, with a founder and distinct medical theory. Unlike most other healers of their day, Methodists rejected dreams and other forms of divination as the cause of illness. They developed a practice—a *way*, based on the Hippocratic doctrines. The epistemological foundations of this philosophy categorized illnesses based on careful symptomatic observation. The physician Galen (131 A.D.–201 A.D.), not a Methodist, advanced their methods, advocating rational reasoning about causation and experimentation (Lloyd, 138, fn. 65). Galen’s method, with the inclusion of experimentation, became a way of testing theories, one of the characteristics of modern science and its method.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Doll, (2005), in his “The Culture of Method” chronicles the history of scientific method and notes that experimentation as the intentional manipulation of variables is a late development in the history of science. Galen’s experimentation is related to practical and applicable knowledge of disease and pharmaceuticals. In contrast,

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *method* does not have a “systematic approach” until the Renaissance, when the Schoolmen translate *methodus* from the Latin (OED); but Galen, practicing in the third century, dominated by the Romans and their sense of order, does have an organized method. Between the first century B.C.E. and the third century C.E., *method* becomes organized in the practice of medicine and *way*, especially *the way*, becomes strongly associated with Christianity. The word *way* is common in the Bible. In the Acts of the Apostles, those of the *Way* were Christians; the *way of God* was the course of God’s providence. *Method* became “a prescribed course of life,” prescribed by the commandments; “a course of action; a moral way of living,” and by the time of the Renaissance, “one’s best or most advisable course” (OED). At the time of the Protestant Reformation, the *Way* was the path to God, a single way with a definite destination, a prescribed course.

William Doll (2005) explores, in depth, the relationship of method to education beginning in the 1500s. He notes that “method,” now reified as a thing in itself, of immense significance, became formalized in this time period:

Method became a movement, permeating virtually all intellectual thinking, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries laid down a legacy—that of “the... arrogance of reason”—which remains with us today. (47)

The *right method* was sought after as the key to knowing—even, the key to heaven. With *the right method*, it was thought, one could *know* everything, which was as close as one could come to the Divine. Strongly associated with the Protestant movement, reading and interpreting

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Aristotle used the word “science” in reference to that of which one could be certain, knowledge ascertained through metaphysical reasoning, not experimentation. This idea is still much present in Gallileo’s science. Further steps in the development of a systematic scientific method came through Francis Bacon’s emphasis on the recording of observations and techniques.

the Bible in the right way, method became “*the Way*,” less of an unfolding journey and more of a prescribed course (curriculum). Drawing on Walter Ong (1971), Doll emphasizes that with the advent of modern “methods,” *art* was transformed to a practice, an exercise. Lengthy apprenticeships, one-on-one relationships, student with master, were no longer necessary; the *art* of learning itself took on a different aspect: skills or techniques were learned—at a distance. Relationship and dialogue were replaced by technologies. In schooling, teachers first addressed lessons to students in large classes; then, textbooks provided information for students to memorize and repeat exercises for practice —again, at a distance. The *distance* achieved by the technologies of modern methods (Ong, 1971, 1983) signifies a difference from earlier Greek methods meaning “together with.” It heralded, as Ong (1983) claims, “the decay of dialogue.” This difference is pertinent to a critical discussion of method, as I will explain later.

The method of curriculum made it possible to school many to act in the same way at the same time. Such a procedure was a short cut, of sorts, allowing a teacher to address a whole class instead of the more specialized attention of apprenticeships. Classes were time-efficient—but this form of schooling was more than that, as Michel Foucault (1982) points out. Over time, beginning in the sixteenth century, the “most innocent institutions of discipline,” for example, schools, hospitals, mental institutions, churches and poor houses, the institutions Foucault calls the “carceral archipelago,”<sup>24</sup> developed into disciplinary institutions. What begins innocently as a procedure, a *method*, is soon observed, assessed, evaluated; “placing the threat of delinquency

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<sup>24</sup> “Carceral” means, literally, of or belonging to a prison; it came to common usage in the mid 1500s.

over the slightest illegality, the smallest irregularity, deviation or anomaly,”—violations of the method (297). Foucault goes on:

A continuous gradation of the established, specialized and competent authorities (in the order of knowledge and in the order of power) which, *without resort to arbitrariness*, but *strictly according to the regulations*, by means of observation and assessment hierarchized, differentiated, judged, punished and moved gradually from the correction of irregularities to the punishment of crime. (299; emphasis added)

The *right method* becomes a disciplinary device. Deviation from the “way” (of doing), the “*one and only way*” (in Peter Ramus’s phrase), necessitates attention and punishment as “the way” becomes the “norm.”<sup>25</sup> “*Without resort to arbitrariness*” implies that negotiation is irrelevant. No conversation is needed, rules replace dialogue. The carceral net in education is organized around “method(s),” the standardization of teaching, of curricula, and of research. In recent years, as Peter Taubman (2004, AAACS; 2004, Bergamo) points out, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) presumes to regulate academic institutions by demanding that institutions and their faculty conform to pre-set standards, a derivative of methods.<sup>26</sup>

This brief reconstruction illuminates a particular relationship between method and methodology and situates method historically in the field of education. In this reconstruction I paint a picture using broad sweeping strokes to create an impression. This narrative is not intended to convey a systematic history of method or thought; it is not inclusive, but rather selects a theme and seeks nuances and variations through time. It is one person’s making sense

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<sup>25</sup> Stephen Triche (2002) points out that schools at that time were referred to as “beating schools.”

<sup>26</sup> On the increasingly powerful influence of NCATE, see also McKnight, *Educational Studies*, 35(2), 212–30; Pinar, 2005.

from an inquiry. (I will present this point more fully in the section on a Pragmatist Approach to Inquiry, below).

In the remainder of this chapter, I explore the organizing principles of modern<sup>27</sup> methodology, the *episteme* of rationality put forward by Timothy Reiss (1982).<sup>28</sup> This exploration is a prelude to discussion of a pragmatist approach to inquiry, to demonstrate that pragmatist thought was developed as a constructive response to the perceived inadequacies of rationalism and not as a rejection of reasoning *per se*. This distinction needs to be emphasized, I believe, since reason and rationality are often conflated.<sup>29</sup> In addressing these inadequacies of rationality, I suggest pragmatist thought supports inquiry that looks beyond modernity; i.e., inquiry that is not constrained by a rationalist methodology.

Pragmatist thought provides alternative organizing principles for inquiry, allowing for a new, more comprehensive understanding of the poetic to emerge. My point in shifting to a pragmatist approach to inquiry is to achieve an understanding of the poetic in another *episteme*, a different way of knowing, a *poietic* ordering of reality (Chapter 4). In this way, one might understand the dynamically construed, inextricably intertwined relationship of “organism/ word/

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<sup>27</sup> In this dissertation, by “modern” I mean both a period of time (1600s–mid–late 1900s) and a form of thought that evolved and eventually became dominant during this time period.

<sup>28</sup> Reiss explains the word *episteme* as a way of knowing a particular order of reality. In this dissertation I have used the word to also mean a way of thinking, or a form of thought, that characterizes a culture. Episteme refers to all human mental life including the production, interpretation, and interrelating of signs. The episteme is specific to time, place, and society.

<sup>29</sup> The comparison of rationalism and pragmatist thought may be perceived as an “either/or” dichotomy. The intent in this chapter, however, is to point out the differences between them as an indication of the ways that pragmatist thought was developed to improve upon rational thought—that is, as a form of “reason.” One of the distinctions that comes forward from the OED quotations providing uses over time is that “reason” (1300–1400) is “a way, a manner, a method; a cause dependent upon human action or feeling.” Rational thought, from its metaphysical origins, distances itself from the human experience, and is governed by the authority of laws and principles of *Nature*—laws and principles it created.

environment” that Rorty claims cannot be reduced to its atomistic parts. Finally, a pragmatist (or pragmaticist) approach to inquiry, through Charles S. Peirce, makes possible later connections to complexity theory and a new understanding of the dynamism inherent in the poetic—*poiesis*.

## **PART TWO: RATIONALISM AND A MODERN EPISTEME**

The modern Western episteme, a way of thinking that characterizes a culture, evolved from previous co-existing discourses;<sup>30</sup> one of those, neo-Platonism, was already heavily influenced by metaphysical reasoning from “self-evident truths.” Scholastic education, 1100–1300, revived neo-Platonist, metaphysical—*rational*—reasoning, based upon the innateness of ideas, and a view of the cosmos as a Great Chain of Being.<sup>31</sup> Walter Ong (1971) suggests that technologies such as writing and the printing press (see also Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, 1962) enabled a divided and chaotic world that was “dissolving and resolving at the same time” (McLuhan, 1962, 1) to have a transition. The previous discourses of the pre-modern no longer provided the right tools for the job which was to represent the newly discovered knowledge of the Renaissance natural world.

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<sup>30</sup> Discourse is a form of representation; a representation of reasoning or thought.

<sup>31</sup> Neoplatonists disagree on many issues, but share the following distinctive doctrines: (1) the first principle and source of reality is utterly transcendent and unknowable; (2) every created entity has its source in The One and emanates from it, creating a Great Chain of Being linking the highest spirituality to the lowest corporeal objects; (3) whatever is created is naturally inferior to its creator; and (4) the ultimate goal of each created soul is to return to The One (*Encyclopedia of the Scientific Revolution: from Copernicus to Newton*, ed. Wilbur Applebaum, 2000; s. v. “neoplatonism”).

## Epistemic Transition

Transitions of discourse are evolutionary as well as revolutionary.<sup>32</sup> Such change is noted in the literature of a culture—if it is a literate culture. In his analysis of *Rabelais and his World*, Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) explores the co-existence and significance of two distinct discourses in the late medieval and early Renaissance, specifically, bawdy “marketplace” discourse is contrasted with formal institutionalized discourse as the transition plays out in power relations in the public square. Similarly, Reiss (1982) marks a transition to rational discourse from a previous discourse of “patterning.” He explains the major difference between the two discourses this way:

There [was] a gradual disappearance of a class of discursive activity, a passage from what one might call a discursive exchange within the world [patterning] to the expression of knowledge as a reasoning practice upon the world [analytico-referential]. (30)

## Discourse of Patterning

The “discursive *exchange within the world*” is the discourse of patterning, also called mythic, or mytho-poetic discourse. A pattern is a model, but by definition, and in practice, *pattern* also involves *variation* or difference.<sup>33</sup> One might think again of the way of the apprentice and the master craftsman. Even as the apprentice strives to imitate the technique and

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<sup>32</sup> On the point of evolutionary and revolutionary change, Timothy Reiss’s (1982) notion of epistemic change is in line with Thomas Kuhn (1970) and C. D. Axelrod (1979). Kuhn and Axelrod both explore the essential tension between the individual and the community of scholars in which they are situated; this tension is transformed to creativity as the individual negotiates between discursive practices (standards, rules and traditions) and attending to the novel. As it is demonstrated in complexity theory, a small change, over time, can lead to major change—perhaps “epistemic” change. The tension between the individual (the one) and the community (the many) must produce “just the right amount of perturbation” (Doll, 1993), experienced by the individual, to lead to creativity. Axelrod uses the term “intellectual breakthrough” as I use the term creativity.

<sup>33</sup> Gregory Nagy (1996) presents the complex notion of *mimesis* in a mytho-poetic culture, which is very different, I suggest, from *mimesis* as it was translated by the scholastics (schoolmen) and developed in modernity.

skills of his teacher, his product is a variation; it will not be exact.<sup>34</sup> I suggest (Chapter 1) that patterning is the organizing structure of a *poietic episteme*, involving a reading and interpretation of signs organized by similarities and difference, resemblances that form patterns. The discourse of patterning is understood to organize comprehension of the natural landscape, humans, society, and the supernatural as a system of transformations. Discourse in this episteme is a tool for finding relations between, without necessarily resolving, differences and contradictions. A discourse of patterning, going back to the times of Homer in early Greek civilization, is associated with “mythic sensibilities,” whose central feature is the notion of *participation*: “participation enacted the relation between man and the immanent and/ or the transcendent” (Tambiah, 1990, 106). Reiss (1982) states that a “discourse of patterning” with its emphasis on the mythic, is not an ordering of the world by the mind, but rather “an ordering of the mind by the world (*bricolage*)” (30).

An “exchange within the world” involves relations of continuity, existential immediacy and contact, and shared affinities between persons, groups, animals, places, and natural phenomena. This kind of immediacy and sense of relations is apparent in the early drafts of Johannes Kepler’s *Somnium* (1634). In over twenty years of writing this work, however, Kepler shapes and shifts his focus and learns to set aside all personal thoughts not directly pertinent to his observations, and so begins to remove himself from that which he observes. As his focus narrows, Kepler’s personality is distanced. Reiss notes that,

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<sup>34</sup> As Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) and Henri Louis Gates (1988) both point out, discourses of patterning (part of primarily oral cultures) involve both repetition and difference; parody (pattern and difference) is a key component of the discourse of patterning, as are play and laughter.

[Kepler's] text fairly clearly divides, therefore, a discourse of patterning from one of analysis and reference. I will propose that the notes [Kepler's marginalia] represent the appearance from within a discourse of patterning of the order [the analytico-referential] of what will shortly become the dominant discourse. (144)

Reiss's analysis of Kepler's writings demonstrates the transition from one discourse to another within Kepler's lifespan—within one book. In the *Somnium*, the recording of lunar speculations influenced by dreams, one sees the imposition of rational discourse in the form of notes upon an unfiltered mytho-poetic discursive process. The scientific-rational, Reiss's analytico-referential, first over-laps, then smothers the mytho-poetic. Over time, epistemically, imaginative qualities of the mytho-poetic are lost as creativity itself becomes defined in terms of the dominating analytic-referential discourse.<sup>35</sup>

The transition in discourse did not go unnoticed. Viewing astrological bodies, making observations, Galileo recorded his concerns about the intermediate role of discourse between both *per*-ceptions, *con*-ceptions and the objects he was describing. Reiss calls this unity “the Galilean trinity,” and he configures it this way: “mind/ discourse/ phenomena.” He notes that the “trinity” is reduced a short time later by Cartesianism to a dichotomy, as awareness of the transition disappears and the word becomes understood to stand for both thought in the mind and object-in-view, which he configures this way: “mind/phenomenon” or “mind/matter.” “Word and thing are brought to coincide in the sense that the former [word] is a completely adequate and

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<sup>35</sup> In educational psychology, E. Paul Torrance, the “Father of Creativity” is “credited with inventing the benchmark method for quantifying creativity and arguably created the platform for all research on the same subject.” (University of Georgia, Faculty of Education <http://www.coe.uga.edu/coenews/2003/EPTorranceObit.html>). In this appropriation, the concept of creativity is reified, objectified, defined, and made into a quantifiable criterion for further categorizing some students as “gifted and talented,” a label that privileges some over others, reinforcing a hierarchical “ordering” of society.

transparent *representation* of the latter” (36; emphasis added). Three separate changes occur here which distinguish this new episteme from the older one of patterning. First, symbolic representation, the *word* or *symbol*, is assumed to be equivalent to the object, an exact representation (a copy). Second, the individual who is perceiving/conceiving is reduced to “mind.” In this regard, another even more subtle change occurs; “experience” is reduced to “experiment,” which in effect focuses the viewer on the object, minimizing the effect the subject him- or herself might have on what is observed (subjective influence). Notation, symbolic representation, becomes a reality; *experience* is mathematized (Dear, 1995), and the scientific self comes into being, one devoid of physicality, emotional attachment, historical past, desires, etc. Dear notes the way that the words “experience” and “experiment” change in meaning in the early seventeenth century to indicate the objectivity of *experiment*, which was previously a variant of personal *experience*.

Reiss explains that it is the act of making observations through a telescope that calls Galileo’s attention to language, and he (Galileo) questions how *individual* observations —representations of a “thing” — can be scientific:

For the assumption as a consequence is that “the scientific knowledge of objects is nought but the result of sign-manipulation, and that their ‘truth’ is merely their utility...” (in Reiss, 1982, 34)

This is, in fact, a criticism that later pragmatist thinkers would make. Dear (1995) frames the questions this way:

How can a universal knowledge-claim about the natural world be justified on the basis of singular items of individual experience? (13)

William Doll (2005) notes Gerald Holton's (1973) research in this area concerning the difference between what scientists do and their reasoning processes (Holton's  $S_1$ ) and how it is (re-)presented (Holton's  $S_2$ ). The distinction is between *dialectical* reasoning ( $S_1$ ) and *demonstrative* reasoning, a distinction originally made by Aristotle. The *demonstrative* proceeds from "'first truths known by intuition' and proceeds carefully step-by-step to 'conclusions necessarily true'" (Max Fisch, 1969, 402; Doll, 2005, 48). Doll claims, supported by Holton, a *family of resemblances* between demonstrative reasoning and scientific method; I suggest further that the (re-) presentation of scientific method conforms to something external— an *ideal form*.

Dialectical reasoning, dealing with the probable (not the certain), is "problem-centered and social; *experiential*, practical knowledge crafted over time via a community of inquirers (neophytes and experts) in the field, relating to the *doing* of science. The telescope, as a metaphor, helps to move discursive practice from the untidy, inefficient, back-and-forth of dialectical reasoning—for which the schoolmen were severely criticized—to the individual observations that worried Galileo. His concerns about the validity of such a solitary enunciation (rather than a *dialectically* reasoned one) and it being scientific seem to vanish. This evaporation can be attributed, as Reiss explains, to the rise to dominance of the new discourse with previous discourses becoming occulted. He comments, "To enumerate [list, name] provokes a kind of hypnosis whereby the distance between the real and the fictional evaporates" (Jean Paris, quoted in Reiss, 1982, 35).

## **The Rise to Dominance of Rationalism**

Relatively quickly, the new discourse organized “an intellectual structure... upon the perceived world” (35). Reiss refers to this modern form of discourse as “analytico-referential,” meaning that it is characterized by both analysis and reference. By “analytico-” he refers to serial (cause and effect) logic. By “referential” he means correspondence of word to object. These two words (analytico- and referential) represent two major characteristics of rational thought. I use the more familiar terms *rationalism* or *rationality* as synonymous with Reiss’s “analytico-referential” (as he does also). Rational discourse is the dominant discourse of a modern (Western) *episteme* (23; Dissertation Introduction, fn. 14).

The discourse of analytico-referentiality *explains* the world, even imposes meaning on the world, a world conceived as set and ordered. The transition from a mytho-poetic discourse of patterning and the rise to dominance of rational discourse represents a change in *reasoning*. Reasoning is a discursive practice; modernist discursive practices are characterized as the “visible and describable... organization of signs”—“called [rationalist] *thinking*” (Reiss, 9). Rational reasoning proceeds from a conceptual framework and is evident and analyzable in discourse practices, such as the production of texts.

## **REISS’S CHARACTERIZATION OF RATIONALISM**

Reiss identifies five characteristics of rationalism. He calls these five “exemplary elements” and maintains that these five exemplary elements affect how we in the modern (western) world function discursively. In Galileo’s and Kepler’s texts Reiss locates the beginnings of a conceptualizing practice, signifying a “conceptualizing mind and world of

objects” (33). The first two of the five exemplary elements are (1) objectivity and (2) the use of metaphor as an ordering device. These two elements derive from viewing objects through a telescope (objectivity). The telescope as a mechanical device narrows the visual field and isolates the object. The procedure is methodized, end-focused. The object, through the telescope, is seen at a distance, from a perspective, and out of context. The telescope, as an intermediary, is a metaphor for discourse. It also represents the (desired) distance between viewer and object.

The third element, related to the first two, is (3) a “perspective” on the object, the “god’s eye view,” sometimes called the “view from nowhere,” one that is fixed and whose certainty is ensured by defining. This view is assumed to be absolute, that things can be known as they are viewed—though they may be broken down into component parts and those parts further analyzed atomistically. As Galileo remarks, however:

While human intellect cannot understand the infinity of propositions in geometry and arithmetic— which knowledge is divine—yet as concerns ‘those few’ which our intellect ‘does understand...its knowledge equals the Divine in objective certainty, for here it succeeds in understanding necessity.’ (in Reiss, 1978, 42)

Galileo’s statement acknowledges the authority of the Divine, the infinitude of mathematics and Divine knowledge—yet the human’s humble striving for certainty and for objectivity. From *a* perspective, humanity can know, with certainty, some “*few*” things. This is a paradox: human knowledge is limited and incomplete, but at the same time “certain.”

Next, closely associated with “objective certainty” is (4) “probability theory” (and later, statistical theory); for the aim of epistemology is to uncover the laws of nature, i.e., the laws of an orderly universe, itself already complete, a reality. Finally, in Reiss’s characterization of the elements of rationality, is (5) the linear narration of causality. Causation, like “reality” is a

holdover from the rational reasoning of Greek metaphysical philosophy: for every effect—in an orderly world—there is a cause.

As these five elements order and shape the conceptualizing practice of rationalism, knowledge is both fixed and finite; that is, through the process of objectifying, boundaries of certainty are clearly defined, as the *object* of that knowledge is defined. The defining of an object constitutes it; it creates a boundary, the difference between the liminal, being that of which one is conscious, and the ineffable, being that for which there is no articulation. For the “inexpressible,” during the early seventeenth century, the French developed the phrase *je ne sais quoi*, indicating a certain something ineffable. It is, perhaps, the point about rationalism that curricularists Dwayne Huebner and James B. MacDonald recognized, that there is something *more*. The *je ne sais quoi* developed as a topic into the *sublime* (sub-liminal), then into a discussion of *taste*, and finally, into a concept in itself—*aesthetics* (Reiss, 1982, 39).

### **Organism, Word, Environment in the Modern Episteme**

The “reasoning practice *upon* the world”—the rationalism of the Western modern episteme— signifies a new phase of man’s (sic) sense of himself: the one who enunciates, enumerates and analyzes the world. This shift in discursive practice (reasoning) marks the emergence of the modern rational self. With the emergence of rationalist discourse in the sixteenth century, the meaning of “self” changes; it becomes equivalent to “mind” and “consciousness” (OED). During this century the autonomous, humanist self emerges. With the rationalist habit to reify concepts, *self* becomes an individual object, and like other objects

becomes defined, categorized, and “normalized” (Foucault, 1982, 295)—one that ultimately can be measured or at least hierarchically ordered in a rational manner.<sup>36</sup>

With the emergence of powerful new conceptualizing practices and the autonomous, humanist self, other discursive practices related to self are devalued. For example, prior to the epistemic shift, man was thought to possess innate understanding due to *nature*, including his relationship to God.<sup>37</sup> The quest was to understand what it means to be human and to understand one’s relationship to God and others. Self was conceived as “soul,” and was constituted through practices of meditation, self-mastery and asceticism, an acknowledgement of the unity of body and soul. Truth was associated with practices of purification, conversion, prayer and contemplation. Significantly, the individual was connected with both God (supernatural) and the community, each of whom was related via their own relationships, creating a pattern of natural and supernatural connections.

Discursive practices of a modern Western episteme (1) determine what knowledge is, how we are constituted as “self’s,” and as knowers; (2) alters the way we perceive relationships between ourselves and others; and therefore, (3) determines how morality is constituted.<sup>38</sup>

Importantly, as Foucault makes obvious, the effect of these discursive practices that constitute

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<sup>36</sup> Rorty summarizes this transition as a shift in practices of “worship”: “Once upon a time we felt a need to worship something which lay beyond the visible world. Beginning in the seventeenth century we tried to substitute a love of truth for a love of God, treating the world described by science as a quasi divinity. Beginning at the end of the eighteenth century we tried to substitute a love of ourselves for a love of scientific truth, a worship of our own deep...nature” (1989, 22).

<sup>37</sup> This concept underlies Descartes belief that he and God could be on the same wavelength, provided Descartes concentrated on his innate ideas and followed rational chains of reasoning.

<sup>38</sup> Foucault claims that the modern episteme is dissociated via (1) the truth through which we constitute ourselves as *subjects* of knowledge; (2) in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as *subjects* acting on others; and (3) in relations of ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral *agents* (1982, 237).

knowledge, self, and relations alter moral and political relations of rational subjects.<sup>39</sup> Foucault illuminates the distinction between knowledge as the *process* of “enunciation” and knowledge as the *object* of that enunciation (Reiss, 1982, 37). The distinction refers also to the difference between humans as active subjects, and therefore the “enunciators,” or the recipient objects toward whom knowledge is directed. The difference that Foucault brings forward in these two positions, one of active subjects, the other of objects, is significant in education. William Pinar and Madeline Grumet’s (1976) development of the notion of *currere* is aimed at creating an awareness of—and indeed, a curriculum founded on—promoting the *active* engagement (experience) of learners in the study of the disciplines. Students need to see the connections between themselves and the subjects they study, to understand the forces that shape the understanding of their lives—to be able to *enunciate*, in the sense of naming their experience.<sup>40</sup> This active approach to learning is the antithesis of schooling as it was envisioned by the early scholastics, and recently criticized by Paulo Freire as the “banking model” of education.

In the modern episteme, the role of discourse itself was occulted; the metaphor of the telescope, that structures language, similarly disappeared.<sup>41</sup> The relationship between the subject and the object, was breached, as experience, particularity, context, historicity, were excluded in pursuit of rational reasoning. Within this conceptual frame, relations, patterns and differences became obfuscated. With this mind, it is impossible to consider the “organism/ word/

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<sup>39</sup> Zygmunt Bauman further develops the effect of the discourse of rationalism on ethics and morality in his book *Postmodern Ethics* (1993).

<sup>40</sup> William Pinar (1994) wrote, “The curriculum is not comprised of subjects, but of Subjects, of subjectivity. The running of the course [*currere*] is the building of the self, the lived experience of subjectivity” (p. 220).

<sup>41</sup> Reiss’s choice of the word “occult” is quite deliberate; in 1625, according to the OED, in the scientific sense of the word, now obsolete, occult meant “not manifest to direct observation; discoverable only by experiment.”

environment,” that Rorty claims is a *wholeness*. As Reiss points out, in a rationalist episteme, “word” disappears, and what is left is the subject/object bifurcation. Discursively, Rorty’s “organism” which is, of course, “self,” is distanced from the phenomenal world at large, the environment, which is the “object.” Discursively, self acts upon the world, at arm’s length, authoritative and enunciating, representing reality as objects. The rationalist *episteme* creates the self/other “problem.” “Self” in the rational world is separate, autonomous, and pronounces *upon* the world. The subject position becomes problematic when the rational *self* is understood as an object, *objectivized*, as Foucault says, the “knowable man” (1995, 305). This *self* becomes the recipient, the depository into which learning is dropped. This self too becomes one that rationalist discursive practices expect to be able to know without consideration of experience, context or culture: the universal man. In rationalist discursive practices, concepts are reified and become both the norm and the reality.

Methods are discursive practices, technologies of rationalism, and a form of regulation, which sits at the heart of discipline (Foucault, 1995, 297). A rationalist episteme organizes the discourse of methods. Consequently, methods may also be regarded as reductive, simplistic—and, in the tendency to regard results as certainties—methods are deterministic, contributing to the perception of truths as static representations of reality. Pragmatist thought offers its own critique of rationalism, pertinent in the way it resists rationalist methods.

### **PART THREE THE PRAGMATIST EVASION OF MODERN METHODS**

Pragmatist thought was formulated amongst the members of the Metaphysical Club, an exclusive men’s club for intellectual, philosophical discussion in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in

the early 1870s. Louis Menand (2001) lists the original members of the club as Oliver Wendell Holmes, William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, Chauncey Wright, Nicholas St. John Green, John Fiske, Francis Ellingwood Abbot, and Joseph Bangs Warner. *Pragmatism* was named by Charles Sanders Peirce, popularized by William James, and brought to education and politics by John Dewey. The name “pragmatism,” which stems from the Greek word related to “practice” and “practical”—*apropos* of the truth of a statement residing in its practical consequences (Peirce, 1998, 332). Peirce summarized the club discussions in a paper he presented to the group, later published as “How to Make Our Ideas Clear.”<sup>42</sup> Peirce reports that the group was impressed with the paper (Ketner, 1998, 279). The ideas that coalesced among them to become “pragmatism” were in response to the circumstances of the time and the general dissatisfaction of the members in regard to logical intellectual thought (reasoning), progress, responsibility, and social ethics. Expressing their intent, Peirce states,

It is easy to show that the doctrine that familiar use and abstract distinctness make the perfection of apprehension has its only true place in philosophies which have long been extinct; and it is now time to formulate the method of attaining to a more perfect clearness of thought, such as we see and admire in the thinkers of our own time.

Various members went on to develop their ideas more fully, especially C. S. Peirce, William James, and Holmes, notably, in the field of legal interpretation.

### **Socio-Historical Context**

Christopher Hookway (2004) notes that Peirce did not approve of the way those following his lead, perhaps especially James, were too casual in their interpretation of his

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<sup>42</sup> “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” *Popular Science Monthly* 12, Jan. 1878: 286–302.

pragmatic maxim.<sup>43</sup> Hookway reports that Peirce disparagingly refers to these followers as having a pragmatist *attitude*: “[Peirce’s] version of pragmatism, which took the form of a precise ‘logical principle,’ was transformed into a ‘philosophical attitude’ by these later thinkers and that, in the process, much that was of value in the doctrine was lost” (119). James, on the other hand, when he introduced the intellectual world to pragmatism in a series of public lectures (1907), used the notion of a pragmatic attitude as that which unites various pragmatists. Drawing on Italian pragmatist Giovanni Papini, James (1907/1995) explains that:

[Pragmatism] lies in the midst of our theories, like a corridor in a hotel. Innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume; in the next someone on his knees praying for faith and strength; in a third a chemist investigating a body’s properties. In a fourth a system of idealistic metaphysics is being excogitated; in a fifth the impossibility of metaphysics is being shown. But they all own the corridor, and all must pass through it if they want a practicable way of getting into or out of their respective rooms. No particular results...but only *an attitude of orientation* is what the pragmatic method means. (21–22; emphasis added).

I suggest the phrase, *attitude of orientation*, is useful in acknowledging differences between those who take a pragmatist approach to inquiry—one guided, but loosely structured—and those who take a set, fixed, universalized approach. An *attitude* is a “disposition” (OED); the differences in the approach to pragmatic thought between someone like C. S. Peirce and Jane Addams are many, but their dispositions to community, democratic values, science, interaction,

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<sup>43</sup> Peirce (1903/1998) explains: “Pragmatism, the maxim that the entire meaning and significance of any conception lies in its *conceivably* practical bearings...which would go to determine how we should deliberately act, and how we should act in a practical way and not merely how we should act as affirming or denying the conception to be cleared up” (145). He has stated it otherwise in several papers; for example: “Pragmatism is the theory that a *conception*, that is, the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life” (xxxvi). Because of his dissatisfaction with the way others used the word “pragmatism,”—“abused in a merciless way,”—he reports that he decided to “kiss the child good-bye,” and change the name of his approach to “pragmaticism”—a name ugly enough to be safe from kidnapers” (335).

growth, and education would characterize them both as pragmatists. In addition, *orientation* being a “process of becoming accustomed to a new situation” or “movement or direction of growth toward light” (OED) is aptly descriptive of two key elements of pragmatism: (1) “fluidity,” referring to a refusal to be caught in static modes, and (2) “growth toward the light” which infers enlightenment, and movement toward the “good,” toward greater community and relations. Scott Pratt (2004) summarizes four “commitments” of pragmatism: to interaction, associated with an instrumental understanding of meaning; to pervasive pluralism which is ontological, epistemological, and cultural; to community; and to growth. (94–95)<sup>44</sup>

These four commitments would seem to resist the idea of “method,” if only because these are an open-ended indication of a *way*. Charles Sanders Peirce and John Dewey, though —both pragmatists— are strongly associated with theorizing a method of thought, a *scientific* method not associated with openness. William Doll (2005) notes this paradox; he suggests that the “new methods” Peirce and Dewey developed were quite different than the popular appropriations of them. While educationists have locked in five linear steps to *the* scientific method, this is quite unlike the method Dewey (drawing on Peirce) envisioned in his *Logic of Inquiry* (1938). Doll explains that Dewey is committed to four aspects of inquiry: (1) to “problem framing,” that the problem is framed as arising from the perception and context of a situation; (2) to practical action; (3) to reason which apprehends ideas evaluated in terms of their consequences and utility; and (4) to interaction: “bringing forth ideas into the light of cultural criticism and development” (Doll, 2005, 52–53). On examination, Dewey’s (and Peirce’s) ideas about method, as elucidated

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<sup>44</sup> Maurice Hamington (2004), draws on Pratt’s pragmatist “commitments” to discuss “embodied care” and ethics in relation to Jane Addams.

by Doll, are not far removed from the “commitments” of pragmatists that Pratt uses to characterize pragmatism, nor to the approach to inquiry laid out by Cornel West (1993).

I suggest that pragmatist thought, like the discursive practices of Galileo and Kepler in the late 1500s and early 1600s, reflects more than local accomplishments. Jane Addams, a progressive social reform activist in Chicago, was not party to the discussions of the Metaphysical Club, but she had profound influence on both George Herbert Mead and John Dewey, considered “classical pragmatists” (Morton White, 1972). Addams’s preparation in the development a pragmatist attitude derived instead from her personal and practical experiences of working with impoverished immigrants. She recognized first “the faces of the poor” (Victoria B. Brown, 2004), but she recognized, as well, the discrepancies between the rhetoric of the “freedom” and “inalienable rights” of democracy and the oppression of workers. She recognized that even such benign words as “immigrant,” and “worker,” concealed the particular nature and condition of the individuals so categorized. Take for example, the word “worker”: Addams recognized that children’s mental, spiritual and physical health was jeopardized by harsh environmental and working conditions (Munro, 1999). The term “workers” conceals the fact that children were being exploited. Addams lobbied for change to labor laws and organization of labor unions. The benefits, she felt, would be that child health would not be compromised, that they might be educated, that they might become better citizens. This work was opposed strongly by those who profited by cheap labor, and by those who opposed the legislation of such “rights.” (also in Liva Baker, 493–510).

This example, from a turbulent social situation in America between the Civil War and World War I, points to the intermingling of political,<sup>45</sup> economic, social, spiritual, scientific, and moral factors that enter into a situation, which may not be apparent to an objective observer. Pragmatist thought—because of its attention to specificity of a situation and its representation—might then be considered on the cusp of a change in *episteme*, a modern *episteme* which began, as Stephen Toulmin points out in his *Cosmopolis* (1990), in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century.

The twentieth century, like the seventeenth century, was a time of epistemic upheaval. In Boston, as in other major cities, such as New York and Chicago, America was in significant flux due to post Civil War challenges: fast-growing labor unions, democratic social and political forces unleashed by heavy immigration (Baker, 237). Authority, truths, ideologies, assumptions of the past were all being called to question in light of new discoveries, new ideas, and a sense of millennial spirit as the twentieth century approached. The biography of Oliver Wendell Holmes (Baker, 1991) provides rich detail of the cultural climate in Boston and Cambridge in the last 30 years of the nineteenth century where pragmatist thought incubated. Baker describes the milieu of Holmes' youth:

The new democracy was challenging the platitudes of the old politics at the same time the new science was challenging the platitudes of the old faiths. The slavery

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<sup>45</sup> I use the word “political” in the sense of referring to “politicalism, political activity; politicalize *v.* (a) *trans.* to make or render political; (b) *intr.* to practise or discourse on politics; politicalization, the action of making political (OED). As Baker (1991, 493–510) explains in exploring Justice Holmes' position, this time in American history marks a transition from the contract between business owners and their individual employees with the social understanding of the owner, as *signeur*, taking care of his employees. In the profit-driven capitalist society, these responsibilities lapsed. Addams and Dewey politicalized social issues, and in this way were political activists. In Holmes's position, he argued in favor of legislation that structured employer/employee relations and was labeled a Progressivist for having done so.

question was one of several that presaged the major transformation in American society during Wendell's formative years. Immigration—nearly three million in the 1850s, most of it from northern Europe, especially Ireland and Germany—urbanization, and industrialization were changing the way America voted and the way America lived. Jacksonian Democrats—Westerners with their egalitarian and anti-intellectual inclinations, newly enfranchised property-less voters, some of them poor tenement dwellers—were questioning the conventional political wisdom and beginning to threaten the traditional leadership status of the elite....Although the leading scientists of Wendell's early youth were careful to square their theories with basic Christian theology, it was becoming clear that new developments and discoveries...would lead shortly to challenge revealed truths. (67)

Adding to Baker's statement, not only would revealed *truths* be challenged, but the way truth was conceived and represented would also be challenged. Once again, as in the seventeenth century, the socio-political, moral and ethical, religious and economic status quo was questioned. With Darwin's theory of evolution, the floodgates of theology burst open. Dewey (1909/1965) explains the significance of Darwin's concept of evolution:

Prior to Darwin the impact of the new scientific method upon life, mind, and politics, had been arrested, because between these ideal or moral interests and the inorganic world intervened the kingdom of plants and animals. The gates of the garden of life were barred to the new ideas; and only through this garden was there access to mind and politics. The influence of Darwin upon philosophy resides in his having conquered the phenomena of life for the principle of transition, and thereby freed the new logic for application to mind and morals and life. (9)

The response of pragmatists to Darwinism was the feeling that a "general movement of intellectual reconstruction" was underway (Dewey, 1965, iv). The new *ethos* was not one of re-producing what was, but rather, finding ways to respond and move forward in ever new, and hence changing situations. The importance of Darwin's work for the pragmatists cannot be over-emphasized. The idea of the world, cosmos, as an evolving one—a radical change from a closed

and stable universe—made the idea of progress—and indeed, the idea of *creativity*— a very different consideration.<sup>46</sup> The past could no longer be the best determinant of the future. The end of the nineteenth century in America, 1870–1900, a time of immense flux, signaled a new enlightenment, and a new, enlightened sense of method.

### **A Developing Pragmatist Attitude**

In Timothy Reiss’s sense of discourse being a tool that works for a purpose, pragmatists were dissatisfied with discursive practices (reasoning) that were no longer working. They felt the need for “open air and possibilities of nature against dogma, artificiality, and the pretense of finality in truth” (James, 1907/1982, 213). Evasion is “the act of escaping confinement,” but it is also to “side-step in avoiding a blow” (OED), or “swerving” (Cornel West, 1989, 9). As the word *evasion* suggests, pragmatists do not reject either *reason* or method; rather, pragmatists intend to improve upon old, ineffective tools.

In post-Civil War America, pragmatists responded to the times and the spirit of emancipation and reconstruction arising from a uniquely American experience. In the Emersonian<sup>47</sup> manner that so affected American imagination and intellectual thought in the

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<sup>46</sup> For Charles Darwin (himself not a “Darwinist”), change was slow and incremental, occurring perhaps in the frame of the “Great Chain.” Darwin did not recognize the ramifications of his own work; and in fact, was appreciative of the interest and support of Chauncey Wright (of the Metaphysical Club) who was very excited by Darwin’s work. He came to Darwin’s defense by publishing articles critical of his (Darwin’s) detractors and explanatory of this great theory. Wright’s work in this area is described by C. S. Peirce as brilliant.

<sup>47</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, a friend of the Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes (Sr.) family, and advisor to “Wendell” (son of the Dr., and later Supreme Court Justice), formed the Congregational Church in his rejection of religious ideologies that he felt stood between man and God. His advice to Wendell in regard to reading Plato: “[You] must hold him at arm’s length. You must say to yourself, “Plato, you have pleased the world for two thousand years: let us see if you can please me” (Baker, 89). Such a direct relationship is picked up by Cornel West (1989), who begins his history of pragmatist thought with Emerson, who “prefigures the dominant themes of pragmatism” (9). Emerson was a cultural critic who “exerted leadership” (10), a phrase that infers the independent quality for which he was known.

nineteenth century, pragmatists were cultural critics who strategized moves to avoid the constraints of ideologies and then (1) re-envision the relationship of science, religion and moral purpose; (2) improve human capacity to solve problems and develop human potential (West, 1989, 43). In general, American pragmatists object to the general application of a universalized method to one's purpose.<sup>48</sup> As Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote,

All the use of life is in specific solutions — which cannot be reached through generalities any more than a picture can be painted by knowing some rules of method. They are reached by insight, tact and specific knowledge. (in Menand, 2001, 342)<sup>49</sup>

“Specific solutions” entail the idea of particularity in a situation to which “methods” pay little attention. Modern research methods, a product of the scientific revolution (Reiss, 1982; Doll, 2005), reflect the epistemological foundations of a dominant, rationalist discourse (Reiss, 1982, 21–54). As such, methods are applied universally without regard to the specificity of a situation. This, too, is characteristic of the rationalist discourse that *is* the methodological foundation of methods.

When Richard Rorty comments that pragmatists are “notably free of ‘methodolatry’” (1999, xxi), besides making a play on words by combining “method” and “idolatry,” he comments on a pragmatist resistance to a naïve adherence to ideologies. Pragmatists are critical

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<sup>48</sup> I refer to the American pragmatists because pragmatism developed out the American experience and culture in the late nineteenth century. Pragmatism subsequently developed in England, primarily in the scholarship of F. C. S. Schiller, and in Italy by Giovanni Papini. I use the terms “pragmatic,” “pragmatic,” and pragmatist as general terms as Peirce uses them to refer to “pragmatist thought.”

<sup>49</sup> In his biography, Liva Baker (1991) states that Oliver Wendell Holmes defies categorization, not fitting easily into any frame. However, as Louis Menand (2001) notes, Holmes was present as an early—and influential—member of the Metaphysical Club, a selected men's group for intellectual and philosophical discussion, that includes the “classical pragmatists” (Morton White, 1972), Charles S. Peirce and William James. Other pragmatist thinkers of the time include W. E. B. Du Bois, and Jane Addams, who both refused the label “pragmatist,” likely on the (pragmatist) principle of objecting to categorization.

of the underlying— perhaps *obscured*—elements of rationalism that configure and determine modern methods.

William James (1907/1982), ever ready to condemn *rationalism*, frames it this way:

Reality stands complete and ready-made from all eternity, rationalism insists, and the agreement of our ideas with it is that unique unanalyzable virtue in them of which she has already told us. As that intrinsic excellence, their truth has nothing to do with our experiences. It adds nothing to the content of experience. It makes no difference to reality itself; it is subservient, inert, static, a reflection merely. It doesn't exist, it *holds* or *obtains*, it belongs to another dimension from that of either facts or fact relations, belongs in short, to the epistemological dimension —and with that big word rationalism closes the discussion....Rationalism [faces] backward to a past eternity. True to her inveterate habit, rationalism reverts to "principles," and thinks that when an abstraction once is named, we own an oracular solution. (240)

James writes passionately of the misconceptions of rationalism, and in the title and substance of his essay, "*The One and the Many*," he identifies one of the meanings of "rationalism" in the word "ratio," (one: many). He responds to a definition of philosophy as "the quest or the vision of the world's unity" by asking "But how about the variety in things?" (1995, 50). Using his famous phrase, he asks, "What is the practical value of the oneness for *us*? And he answers, "Asking such questions, we pass from the vague to the definite, from the abstract to the concrete" (51). Where rationalism tends to focus on universal principles (James refers to this tendency as *monism*), pragmatists are interested in relations and diversities (*pluralism*). In this essay, James identifies many of the issues that the first pragmatists were responding to: the nature of truth, role of experience/nature, external reality, eternal universal laws/principles, Hegelian worship of the Absolute (past cultures), transcendent truths, a view *on* the world, and the privileging of a set method.

In the remainder of this section, I bring forward selected pragmatist views to illustrate the ways in which pragmatist thought reacted to Darwinism and the circumstances of history, subsequently finding method out of date as *the way*.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, for example, brings to pragmatist thought the idea of “fluidity”: nothing should be “fixed” in universal principles. Logical reasoning from *a priori* truths is just not the way people make practical choices most of the time: “general propositions do not decide concrete cases” (O. W. Holmes, in Menand, 2001, 342). And, in the first paragraph of the first lecture, in his important work in the field of American Law, *The Common Law*, he states,

It is something to show that the consistency of a system requires a particular result, but it is not all. *The life of the law has not been logic: it has been experience.* (O. W. Holmes, 1881/1923, 1; emphasis added)

By *experience* Holmes means “the name for everything that arises out of the interaction of the human organism with its environment: beliefs, sentiments, customs, values, policies, prejudices—what he called “the felt necessities of the time.” Another word for it is “culture” (Holmes, in Menand, 2001, 341–42). Holmes questioned religious ideologies and legal traditions derived from England; but other “classics,” including past forms of thought, were called to question in light of changing times in America.

Nicholas St. John Green, a lawyer and contemporary of Oliver Wendell Holmes, comments on the Great Chain metaphor, called to question with the publication of Darwin’s work on evolution:

Causation is the law of cause in relation to effect. Nothing more imperils the correctness of a train of reasoning than the use of metaphor. By its over free use the subject of causation has been much obscured. [Bacon’s] phrase “chain of causation,” which is a phrase in frequent use when this maxim is under

discussion, embodies a dangerous metaphor. It raises in the mind an idea of one determinate cause, followed by another determinate cause, created by the first, and that followed by a third, created by the second, and so on, one succeeding another till the effect is reached...There is nothing in nature which corresponds to this. Such an idea is a pure fabrication. (St. John Green, 1933, 11)

Logician and historian of science, Charles Sanders Peirce (who went on to develop a logic of semeiotics), considered “thought” to be interpretive, ongoing, inseparably intertwined with language, observation, and experience. Peirce criticized and re-worked Hegel’s triadic system of categories, to place stronger emphasis on the phenomenological category of “firstness” and the role of abduction (based on experience) in thought. Peirce (1998) enjoys criticizing Hegel, noting that what distinguishes his work from Hegel’s and gives pragmatism its “*pragmatoidal character*” is his (Peirce’s) emphasis on phenomenology in reasoning. He characterizes phenomenology as a “science that does not draw any distinction of good and bad in any sense whatever, but just contemplates phenomena as they are, simply opens its eyes and describes what it sees” (143). Peirce places great emphasis on the power of scientific observation: “Not what it sees in the real as distinguished from figment,” and not restricted to “the observation and analysis of experience,” but in extending the analysis to include

all the features that are common to whatever is experienced or might conceivably be experienced or become an object of study in any way direct or indirect. (143)

Peirce’s strong emphasis here is that phenomenology is the ground of abduction, hypothesis formation, and the beginning (and end) of sound reasoning.

Based on mathematical theory, also enlightened by Darwin’s theories, Peirce opened up the concept of probability to “possibility.” The importance of this consideration is relevant to complexity theory, because the cosmos can now be seen as creative and evolving, instead of

fully determined and closed (as I will discuss in Chapter 4). For Peirce, pragmatism was always more than an attitude; it is also sound logically and the basis of what good science is about.

Chauncey Wright, a brilliant philosopher, computer for the Geographical survey, and climatologist, recognized the world in terms of change rather than constancy, thereby getting rid of eternal truths. Wright was an atheist and his club discussions served to develop James' ideas about "beliefs" — and therefore, "truth." In this time, ontology, as Morton White (1972) notes, was "defined as the science of the supernatural or the non-phenomenal" (138). For James (1902/1982a), the "ontological imagination" is:

Your whole subconscious life, your impulses, your faiths, your needs, your divinations, have prepared the premises of which your consciousness now feels the weight of result; and something in you absolutely *knows* that the result must be truer than any logic-chopping rationalistic talk, however clever, that may contradict it. (73)

How one recognizes truth then is that it *feels* right; we *believe*.

Jane Addams, with her strong sense of democratic values and an orientation to thought-in-action, enacted pragmatism. For pragmatists, thought begins with doubt or perturbation. Addam's Hull-House neighborhood was an immigrant urban ward of poverty, disease, and appalling living conditions. Her pragmatist thought was grounded in the activities of Hull-House, a settlement house that she organized with Ellen Gates Starr. She and the core group of women managing the residence, "gathered statistics, investigated factories and industries, conducted health examinations, [and] examined sanitary conditions" (Deegan, 1988, 6). This information, contributing to a deep understanding of a situation, in this case, the neighborhood, was mapped and documented. "Addams translated the facts [data] into everyday language, articulating the

problems and needs of the community” (6). With this information, she could propose improvements and lobby for reforms to address specific problems. Addams saw—because it was clearly evident, but also because she was intimately involved—that poor sanitation was contributing to increase incidence of disease in residents. The Hull-House team presented statistical information to city authorities and lobbied to have facilities improved. She wanted “to combine scientific and objective observation with ethical and moral values to generate a just and liberated society” (6). Addams realized that although the rhetoric of America is the land of opportunity, freedom and equality, it was “classed” by color: those who were educated were intellectual, white collars; those who were not educated were blue-collar laborers. Education was the key to democracy, but this was another problem: children were laborers. Addams lobbied to change labor laws.

Over the course of his long and productive career, John Dewey made many contributions to a pragmatist attitude. One of Dewey’s foremost ideas originated in his discussions with Jane Addams; he acknowledged the significant role of social interaction for democracy, the immensely important interactive relationship of the individual and the community. Intellectual, personal, and communal growth depends on interaction. A second contribution associated with Dewey, especially in the field of education, is his concept of *experience* and with it, the idea of reflection. Discursively, the subject/object split embedded in a rationalist *episteme* is problematic for pragmatists. The effect of rationalist discourse is that it distances the subject from the object, diminishing subjective influence in making observations. Dewey’s way of bridging the subject/object bifurcation is, I suggest, in the act of reflecting on an experience (culture). In so

doing, the subject is *being* (becomes) an object, and one's *self* is seen differently — which is how one grows or learns through experience. A pragmatist attitude, in countering rationalist tendency to isolate and separate, begins with the assumption of interaction, *relations*, and recognizes that learning involves the interaction of the subject with the “object” of inquiry via experience. This, I suggest, is the wholeness of Rorty's “organism/word/environment.” A pragmatist *self* is inextricably tied to experience, and is understood as a discursive process, rather than a dissociated object. For Peirce, as I suggest for Dewey, *self* is an inference, and not a concept reified.

Pragmatism, pragmatist thought, positioned as it is on the cusp of epistemic change, has often been read through a modernist lens, leading to misinterpretations. Dewey's scientific method is one example of an interpretation not in keeping with a pragmatist attitude of orientation. As Cornel West (1993) points out, pragmatist thought is embedded in, arises from, notions of “democracy as a way of life and mode of being in the world—not simply as a form of governance...[but] the exciting yet frightening risk of living, thinking and feeling democratically... [D]emocracy has deep ontological, existential and social implications” (167). Democracy is the ideal.<sup>50</sup> Pragmatism tends to question discursive practices that work to challenge democracy's principles, that we may move forward as individuals-in-communities in an ever-changing culture.

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<sup>50</sup> As rationalist discursive methods lead to and reinforce hierarchical, either/or forms of thought, the democratic ideal of pragmatism moves beyond—not to consensus, not to compromise—to participatory problem solving through conversations, in the spirit of, with a vision of, ultimate *wholeness*.

## **A Pragmatist Approach to Inquiry—Four Considerations**

A pragmatist approach to inquiry is guided by pragmatist attitudes formed in response to *rationalism* and in light of Darwinism. Inquiry is the word Peirce uses consistently to describe an open-ended process of investigation. Key elements of this new approach involve a new appreciation for changes over time; the importance of seeing culture, thought, events in historical context; an understanding of language as a negotiation and interpretive process; and the role of experience—phenomenology—in thought.

For the pragmatists, the *doing* of science, or research, or inquiry, involves the experience of trying, actually of doing, of experimenting. Peirce (1898/1998) suggests,

There is no positive sin against logic in *trying* any theory which may come into our heads, so long as it is adopted in such a sense as to permit the investigation to go on unimpeded and undiscouraged. (48)

Let nothing stand in the way of inquiry, challenges Peirce: do not impede, do not discourage. His statement is further support, if one is needed, for the kind of broad-ranging, synoptic approach that William Pinar calls for: an inter-disciplinary, historical panorama, seeing the present historical moment in light of the past, for the purpose of reconfigur[ing] the intellectual content of the curriculum. The investigation must keep in mind the present moment, and guided by it, proceed to the settling of doubt.

The (prophetic) pragmatist approach to inquiry is demonstrated by Cornel West (1993), in his exploration of terms “multiculturalism” and “Eurocentrism,” to indicate how matters of race are concealed behind rhetoric. He identifies four constitutive elements: (1) discernment, (2) connection, (3) tracking hypocrisy, and (4) hope.

Discernment. A prophetic pragmatist approach to inquiry is specific and “it makes democracy a basic focus” (20). Pragmatists attend to specific events or even *words* (representations, signs) and their inextricable connection to humans and culture. For example, Cornel West (1993, 3–7) asks, what do we mean by “freedom” or “democracy.” These are conceptual, intellectual words that demand *discernment*, a broad and deep analytical grasp of the present in light of the past, leading to a view of what is obscured or obfuscated. Discernment involves collecting historical, specific information for an in-depth understanding. The inquirer asks—Where does this concept come from? What does it mean now, here in this place. With this understanding, how may one go forward?

Connection. On the basis of our common humanity, recognizing our differences, we need to be empathetic toward others—“empathetic identification,” not as concepts, but as human beings. Connection is a moral “moment”:

You’ve got to be rooted within...traditions, intellectual and political...and yet be conversant with the best of what’s going on about the academy...to know more in order to make your links better...you have the roots required for what you have to say to bring some insight, and your insight can be informed by the very folk who you’re talking to, because they have a wisdom to bring. (100)

This connectedness situates inquiry (and its representation) in relation to our human-ness inseparable from cultural and historical influences. The connection is not only to the experience, but is the ability to make connections between the local situation and the culture, involving political, economic, and historical relations.

Tracking Hypocrisy. In tracking hypocrisy, West suggests, prophetic pragmatist inquirers seek to address the gap between “rhetoric and reality,” the social terrain of rationality—the

ironies, paradoxes and deceptions. We need to understand this self-critically, to understand that we are a part of that rationality, shaped by the technologies we criticize, and therefore complicit in that rationality. West calls this “intellectual humility.” He asks, for example, looking at racism and democracy in America, what does democracy mean to those on whose backs the functioning of democracy sits? The answer is ugly: Democracy is intertwined with capitalism in a market economy that depends on the black working poor, a continuation of slavery. “What are the political consequences of one’s *identity*?” he asks, when that identity is determined by the market economy. Difficult moral issues arise with this knowledge. With intellectual humility—and honesty—the prophetic pragmatist takes responsibility for bringing forward even ugly truths that they may be dealt with.

Hope. The final moment of prophetic pragmatist inquiry is hope:

To engage in an audacious attempt to galvanize and energize, to inspire and to invigorate world-weary people...the future is open-ended and what we think, and what we do, can make a difference. (6)

West continues, “What is distinctive about pragmatism is the premium on the future, the sense of possibility, potentiality...” (46). I am struck by West’s phrase of “exerting leadership,” and find that situations that require hope demand the ability to create—to work toward greater community and the good for all. What needs to be done? How do we get there? In this phase, while West turns to spirituality, I focus on the spirit of creating, *poiesis* in curriculum.

### **The Inquiry Represented**

Pragmatists do not claim truth as the result of inquiry. As Peirce (1898/1998) says, “It is... important that we should realize that the very best of what we humanly speaking, know, we

know only in an uncertain and inexact way.” (51). Dewey’s notion of warranted assertability is, as Cornel West suggests, what one feels is assertable as truth at this time. The inquiry represents an abstraction of an experience—where I am at this stage, enough to settle my doubts on an issue, the basis on which I am willing to rest at the moment, and from which I will begin further inquiries when this truth will no longer hold. It is recognized as the inquirer’s interpretation of events (of interaction), a stage of an ongoing process, and therefore, for pragmatists, inquiry is open-ended. “Process” brings with it, impermanence.

What one offers, in the *representation* of the inquiry, is not *mimetic* in its modernist, rationalist sense of *imitation, copy*; it is not modeled on *a way* of thought, or *a way* of proceeding toward a certain truth. A pragmatist understands discourse not as a medium conducting truth, but rather, as a tool for description. The representation is a *reconstruction* of an experience, how one currently makes sense of things and/or events, seen anew because in the inquiry one has created a panorama, an expanded “view” of an event, a synoptic vision (Pinar, 2004). The narrative describes what is revealed in the interaction of the inquirer with the subject. Since it is the inquirer’s calling of these events into existence, it is a creating, a naming—as Foucault claims, an enunciation. The inquirer names (describes) what is discovered, what s/he finds in her exploration, investigation.

What is revealed in the process of engagement is seen in all of its aspects, imagined in circumstances, seen in context. In this regard, Roger Ames and David Hall (2001) point to one of the differences between Eastern philosophy and Western with respect to seeing; the difference, they suggest is apparent in John Dewey’s writing following his stay in China. Dewey says,

The visible is set in the invisible; and in the end the unseen decides what happens in the seen; the tangible rests precariously upon the untouched and ungrasped. (in Ames and Hall, 2001, 118)<sup>51</sup>

This seeing involves the intense engagement in the investigation that leads, as James Garrison points out, to developing a *feeling* for a situation—the poetic.<sup>52</sup> Following a method does not allow for the type of inquiry that “*goes beyond*” to involve itself in desires, feelings, and the spirit of learning. My methodology in this dissertation is to conduct inquiry in such *a way* as to go beyond the rationalist epistemology that has held us captive for so long. This “proffered hypothesis” is the result of my intense engagement in an inquiry into the poetic, a description of the connections I make in viewing a panorama of interconnections and co-constructions between organism, word, and environment (or, self/ discourse/culture). This hypothesis is proffered in the spirit of conversation, that is, as my contribution to the ongoing efforts of curriculum theorists to re-conceive education, that is, to *poietically* imagine how educationists might proceed, rather than to re-form education by merely rearranging, what already exists.

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<sup>51</sup> In *Experience and Nature* (1958), pp. 43–44.

<sup>52</sup> Jonas Soltis, editorial consultant to Teachers College Press, introduces James Garrison’s (1997) *Dewey and Eros* by calling attention to two radically different versions of John Dewey’s “scientific method.” The first is: “the cool, scientific, logical one: of five linear steps—from doubt, problem, data, hypothesis, test—to solution” (x). The other version, that Garrison suggests is closer to the pragmatist approach of John Dewey, is quite different, notes Soltis: “Garrison gives us a “warmer interpretation of feeling, desire, and the human need to deal with one’s perceived disequilibrium by engaging imaginatively and creatively to resolve the situation, thereby restoring one’s sense of equilibrium and finding satisfaction” (x). For Soltis, Garrison’s approach is *poetic* simply because it adds feelings, desires and warmth.

## CHAPTER 3 SEARCHING FOR THE POETIC: THE WELL-WORN GROUND

### INTRODUCTION: TRACKING THE POETIC

My intent in this chapter, in keeping with *discernment*, described in the methodology of this dissertation, is to track uses of *poetic* over time, to explore historical and cultural uses of the word and to look at its entangled relationship to the “organism/ word/ environment” construal.<sup>53</sup>

As a form of representation *and* as part of the construal of self and culture, the poetic is historically situated in the realm of intellectual activity. The form, and the value attributed to it, however, have changed over time. I note here that I have not found a concise, consistent, baseline definition of *poetic* despite its common use, especially in relation to art or literature. Writing about “The Poetics of Open Work,” Umberto Eco (2004) notes, “In every century the way that artistic forms are structured reflects the way in which science or contemporary culture views reality” (169). This is akin to Timothy Reiss’s (1982) point in *The Discourse of Modernity*: that what we view as “reality”—and which is represented in our discourse—is a culturally situated phenomenon. There is no particular internal validity to reality other than what the culture ascribes to it. Notions about the poetic—since Aristotle— are as subject to change as are the notions concerning rational thought, because these two, the artistic and the analytic discourses have been shaped in relation to each other. How these concepts are used, what

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<sup>53</sup> I draw on Martin Heidegger’s assertion that a culture is known through its practices. He claims that it is a modern phenomenon, one of five characteristics of the *modern* world, that “‘human activity is conceived and consummated as culture’ which means that culture is ‘the realization of the highest values’ and through such nurturance ‘becomes the politics of culture’” (in Peters, 2002, 7). I take Heidegger’s point to be that in the modern world, the cultural value placed on human productivity has determined the cultural “order,” or system of relationships.

purpose they serve, whose purpose they serve are questions of interest to educators and curriculum scholars because what we teach and how we teach it hinges on modern constructions of both the poetic and the rational.

Eco's short article on "open work" is concerned with "a number of recent pieces of instrumental music...linked by a common feature: the considerable autonomy left to the individual performer in the way he chooses to play the work" (167). The point is not in regard to interpretation of a complete musical piece, to be played, of course, as the musician feels the piece may be played being true to the composer's piece of work. Rather, Eco points to four variations on a theme of incompleteness: the composer providing varying degrees of completeness, but still leaving "spaces" for the musician to "finish" the work. Eco then clarifies what is meant by the term "open work" in musical composition:

A work of art...is a complete and *closed* form in its uniqueness as a balanced organic whole, while at the same time constituting an *open* product on account of its susceptibility to countless different interpretations which do not impinge on its unadulterable specificity. Hence every reception of a work of art is both an *interpretation* and a *performance* of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself. Nonetheless, it is obvious that works like those of Berio and Stockhausen are "open" in a far more tangible sense...they are quite literally "unfinished": the author seems to hand them on to the performer... seemingly unconcerned about the manner of their eventual deployment. (169)

Eco's article concerns the relationship of art— aesthetic theory—to scientific, or rationalist, thought. That relationship begins, I suggest, with Aristotle's *Poetics*. Eco suggests that a new trend to open work parallels an open-ness in contemporary scientific thought; therefore the completion of the work will not be "a conglomeration of random components ready to emerge from the chaos in which they previously stood and permitted to assume any form

whatsoever, but rather, will have a “structural vitality...even though it admits of all kinds of different conclusions and solutions for it.” His point being that the “macroscopic divergence” between musicians in the performance of the open piece will be apparent, however, between the “musical communication [in the score] and the time-honored tradition of the classics” the performance well played will predictably have both coherence and variation (173).

In this chapter, I track the poetic, from the variety of meanings attributed to it in the present back to its classical and medieval roots. Continuing in the mode established in the Introduction, painting with broad brush strokes, I create an impression of the poetic, based on *discernment*, Cornel West’s (1993) word for the historical work necessary to uncover obfuscated details that over time have influenced how one might think about the poetic in the present. I am keeping in mind ideas related to generativity and the emergence of the new. The panorama I create in this exploration, from present to past, is to view the poetic as a form of representation in the “organism/ word/ environment” construal.

### **The Poetic Present: A Modernist Approach**

An accepted analytic way to find the meaning of a word today is to consult a dictionary and/or thesaurus. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *poetic* refers to *poetry*. *Roget’s Thesaurus* is more helpful in pinning down where the poetic fits in the modern scheme of meanings. It was Peter Mark Roget’s (1852) plan in creating his thesaurus to “make a collection of words arranged according to the ideas which they express” (vii). Current editors of *Roget’s Thesaurus* elaborate on his schema:

Words express ideas—the ideas we have of tangible objects as well as abstractions. Words expressing related ideas may be grouped under general heads;

these general heads may be sorted into a system, so that we have a comprehensive classification into which, theoretically, any word in the language may be fitted and related to a context. (vii)

Roget's conception was to contextualize words, finding other words through which the idea might be most aptly expressed. Following Aristotle, he devised a "system of categories, logically ordered" (viii), aligned with philosophical topics, to provide a reference that would ultimately reduce questions of meaning—to "limit the fluctuations to which language has always been subject," and to serve as an "authoritative standard for [language] regulation" (xxxiv). He states at the end of the introduction to the first edition:

Nothing would conduce more directly to bring about a golden age of union and harmony among the several nations and races of mankind than the removal of that barrier to the interchange of thought and mutual good understanding between man and man, which is now interposed by the diversity of their respective languages. (xxxvi)

I use *Roget's Thesaurus* almost as often as I use the *Oxford English Dictionary*, both of which tout themselves as authoritative references in the use of modern language—modern ideas. Of concern, as I read Roget's introduction,<sup>54</sup> is his universalizing sense of ideas conveyed in language; it is clear to him that ideas themselves are universal, his categories are universally appropriate, and within modern English are contained all the necessary ideas that will lead to "understanding between man and man."

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<sup>54</sup> A footnote in the original Introduction to *Roget's Thesaurus* (1852) highlights the modernist Eurocentric position in relation to other *forms* of knowledge: "The principle by which I have been guided in framing my verbal classification is the same as that which is employed in the various departments of Natural History....[A]n attempt has been made to construct a systematic arrangement of ideas with a view to their expression....[Earlier Sanskrit systematic arrangements, 0–100 BCE] were, as might be expected, exceedingly imperfect and confused, especially in all that relates to abstract ideas or mental operations" (xxxv).

Aware of the ethnocentrism in this thought, I begin my search to understand the *poetic*. In the *Thesaurus*, one is referred to “imagination.” Indeed, Under Class IV (Intellect), Division 1 (Formation of Ideas), Section VII, (Creative Thought), *imagination* is listed last, just below *supposition*. *Supposition* is privileged in this schema by being synonymous, or associated, with *theoretical, hypothetical, philosophical, conjecture and surmise*. The poetic is, it seems, low on the intellectual scale and but a small aspect of imagination. To be *imaginative* is to be *creative, original, resourceful, fertile*. When *imagination* is *poetic*, it is grouped with *ecstasy*<sup>55</sup> and *frenzy*; *poetic* imagination is *fictional, rhapsodic*. *Rhapsodic* in the dictionary means “relating to a rhapsody, or with the emotional and improvisational qualities of a rhapsody; joyfully enthusiastic or ecstatic about.”<sup>56</sup> In *Roget’s Thesaurus*, *Rhapsodical* is grouped with *rambling, desultory, unsystematic* —under the heading “Fitfulness.”<sup>57</sup>

I note specifically that, here in the thesaurus, under the heading of *imagination* to be creative is “*unimitative*,” i.e., “not imitative.” The word that Aristotle uses in relation to the poetic is *imitation*. For Aristotle, the poetic is *imitative*, which he considers to be creative and imaginative. In the computer dictionary I used, and for *Roget’s Thesaurus* poetic is *not* imitative. I wonder about this contradiction and of what Aristotle thought the poetic to be imitative. Indeed,

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<sup>55</sup> The relationship between the poetic and ecstasy seems extreme, but Peter Kingsley (2003) notes, *ecstasy* was related to the practices of certain healers, interpretations of dreams, and induced states of altered consciousness. Poet, healer and logician, Parmenides “described how he had been given all the knowledge he taught by a goddess after he traveled to meet her in another world. This is because he was a priest of Apollo who specialized in the mastery of other states of consciousness: for him, our familiar world was an illusion that he could leave behind and re-enter at will. And he was a healer—a healer who worked through ecstasy, through the inspired interpretation of dreams, through immersing himself and others for extended periods of time in utter stillness” (web-page).

<sup>56</sup> *Encarta World English Dictionary*, Microsoft Word X, 1999, s.v. “Rhapsodic”

<sup>57</sup> It is interesting to note Section VI (Extension of Thought, *to the past, to the future*), includes words such as *oracle, prediction, foresight, or memory*. In the temporal sense, for Roget, *imagination* exists only in the present.

what does imitative mean for Aristotle? An inquiry into uses of *poetic* historically leads to insights regarding conceptualizing practices, that is, discursive practices, and conceptions of *self*, different in postmodern, modern and archaic times.<sup>58</sup>

### **POETICS IN LITERARY THEORY: MOVING TOWARD THE POSTMODERN**

In the library of Louisiana State University, a keyword search of “poetic” reveals 1, 584 book titles, 561 written in the last ten years. Most of these books indicate by their descriptors that they refer to literary criticism. The word “poetics” has a long history in literary theory, beginning with Aristotle’s *Poetics*, claims literary theorist, Jonathan Culler (1997). He explains:

Poetics starts with attested meanings or effects and asks how they are achieved. (What makes this passage in a novel seem ironic? What makes us sympathize with this particular character? Why is the ending of this poem ambiguous?)... Poetics [tries] to understand how literary works achieve the effects they do. (61)

Poetics, in literary theory, then, has to do with interpretation of the text in relation to literary conventions. Among the books listed in this search, there is an obvious break with the formalist and modernist tradition of “attested meanings,” assumptions of truth and the presumption of a universal reader, a universal author, and the objectivity of language, as more recent scholars contest this tradition and assert positions of difference in the reading and writing of literature. Contestations, however, exceed purely literary conventions and take such forms as Dalibor Vesely’s (2004) *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of*

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<sup>58</sup> Timothy Reiss (1982) points out that although Aristotle and Plato are often considered to be the source of rationalist—modern— thought, because “individuality” was not yet part of the conceptualizing practices, we were not truly “modern” until after Galileo, when conceptualizing practices shifted to make an autonomous, “willful” *self* part of the modern *episteme*. At the end of modernity, postmodernist Katherine Hayles’s (1999) inquires into what it means to be human in a “post” liberal humanist society, that is, querying conceptions of *self*. This inquiry, explores the relationship of the poetic to conceptions of self in three time periods to suggest that in postmodern times a complex, *poietic self* might be part of conceptualizing practices of a postmodern episteme.

*Creativity in the Shadow of Production*, which discusses the aesthetics of architecture in terms of “rehabilitation of the fragment,” “the nature of communicative space,” and “the shadow of modern technology.” Other examples are: Karen Jackson Ford’s (1997) *Gender and the Poetics of Excess: Moments of Brocade*, in which “excess” is discussed *contra* containment, discipline, sexuality and women’s literature; and Edmunds Bunkse’s (2004) *Geography and the Art of Life*, which provides telling and insightful descriptors to illuminate a shift in “geographic sensibilities” between “house and home,” “traveler to tourist,” “wonders of the world and knowing one’s self.” Geographical perceptions are shaped by language. These books, by their descriptors, each infers something more than an objective account— each entertains the idea of subjective difference.

Historically, the writing of difference stems from poststructural scholars such as Jacques Derrida and his critique of the metaphysics of presence, underscoring the need to consider what is *not* signified, that which is absent, excluded, or denied. His deconstruction of the text, in the broadest sense of text being anything that is a “sign,” led the poststructuralist movement in continental philosophy in the later 1960s. Richard Rorty (1985) notes that Martin Heidegger led the Continental “break with scientism” (and its subject/object split), followed by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Derrida, but only on the Continent “did this repudiation lead philosophers to align themselves with the literary as opposed to the scientific [and analytic] culture.” Gadamer repudiated “Kant’s spectatorial notion of the ‘aesthetic’” and Derrida approached “language as a seamless intertextual web.” Together they “blur the distinction between philosophy and literature, the serious and the playful, the cognitive and the non-cognitive, the aesthetic and the moral” (751).

The idea of “difference” is one of subject positions, that is, the subject in relation to the object, no longer assumed to be both absent and universalized in whatever category *he* is assumed to belong. This difference is manifested in the re-emergence of the subject, which means that “objectivity” is denied. When the subject comes to presence, “experience” is re-introduced. The shift in subject positions brings first person narrative, reintroduces narrative voice into the text. First person is characteristic of both poetic and rhetorical writing.

Compatriots and colleagues of Derrida, French feminists of the 1970s, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous, use the phrase “poetic writing,” also called *l’écriture féminine* (women’s writing) or “writing the body,” to bring to public awareness women’s position of *differance* in relation to the dominant discourse. The *poetic* here refers to the orality of poetics, its existence prior to “masculine” discourse, its differences in regard to the political, moral, ethical, and existential aspects of representation. The poetic language of *l’écriture féminine* resists the structures of *phallogentric* discourse—the grammar, logic, and linearity—that privileges representation from a male perspective; that is, language as tool of male domination, language that is normative from a male perspective. From a feminist perspective, language is a disciplinary device for shaping thought/representation to a hierarchically ordered, male dominated world.<sup>59</sup> Poetic writing here resists that act of violence. Kristeva, particularly, brings to awareness the psychoanalytic influence in the semiotics of language.

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<sup>59</sup> The orality of the poetic refers to the rhythmic, fluid form of language that is relatively unstructured, compared with masculinist discourse which is logically structured. Such an orientation builds on the existential and psychoanalytic relationship between the poet, language and world in a manner not unlike Rorty’s “organism / word / environment.” Here poetic language reclaims *jouissance*, the sexual/ sensual pleasure of language in defiance of the “objectivity” of masculinist discourse.

Significantly, though poststructural and deconstructive thought brought the idea of difference to recent recognition, authors have been writing difference for many years. In my search of the literature to understand the poetic, I found *Elizabeth Bishop: Her Poetics of Loss*. Susan McCabe (1994) helps me in the struggle to understand more about representation and its entangled relationship to “organism/ word/ environment.” An American poet, Bishop (1911–1979), writing in the mid-twentieth century, is neither poststructuralist nor feminist in the usual sense, but does resist a “coherent system of beliefs that might provide ultimate meaning” (McCabe, 1994, 243). These beliefs concern not only the assumptions embedded in the concept of representation, that are taken for granted and “provide ultimate meaning,” but also the way those assumptions affect a sense of self. Again, *representation* is, generally, in modernist terms, one thing standing for another. In effect, one thing is in *imitation* of another. *Imitation* is from the Greek word, *mimesis*, the concept underlying poetics as the knowledge of skills in writing poetry, generalized later to forms of literature. *Mimesis* is a multifaceted concept; it is embedded in the assumption that words stand for—*represent*— objects. In addition, however, *mimesis* means, for Aristotle, that art is a skill, that properly developed provides forms that *imitate* nature. *Nature* is, as Aristotle conceives it, man’s nature. *Nature* at the time, for the Greeks, was the *ideal form*, proportions founded on the human body and projected anthropomorphically on the world. *Nature* as a part of *man* is both universal and *categorical*. Ultimate meaning in representation is found, for Aristotle, in this knowledge. In his time, poetry, properly written, encourages both the writer and the reader to think in categorical—i.e., universal— terms.

One might say then, that modernist poetics, as a representational code, has embedded in it universal and categorical values and forms that are the basis of ultimate meaning, as either *truth* or *reality*. The universal is a conceptual word that becomes iconic, bearing the cultural ideal form. For example, the word “woman” contains cultural values for an ideal woman of the right size, type, gender. The statement, “Elizabeth is a woman” is a categorical statement representing a universal truth; the assumption is, “this is that”—a *mimesis*—the particular *is* the universal. As an equivalent, the word or symbol becomes “real”; such reification of representation is very obvious in our consideration of the number three (3) being, not the abstraction it is, but the “real thing.” The assumption that high scores represent real intelligence and understanding is another expression of mimetic thinking. Representation of reality in these conceptual terms is the basis of knowledge and judgments.

For Elizabeth Bishop, however, values and practices of the culture are called to question by her sense of difference in regard to representation. Elizabeth Bishop is a lesbian, and therefore her reality, her truth is not represented by “woman,” since *woman* is assumed to be the *ideal* form (from a straight male perspective)—heterosexual. The poetics of representation is called to question. As with other postmodernists (particularly in the arts and sciences) and poststructuralists (in literary theory) who followed, recognition of *difference* brought about a “crisis of representation” (Greene, 1994; Eldridge, 1996). The crisis led, as Maxine Greene points out, to “rejection of universal constraints and standards, and of frameworks in which all differences may be resolved (1994, 216).

In Elizabeth Bishop's case, it is perhaps too strongly stated to say "rejection" of constraints and standards; troubling issues of identity, positioning, and the objectivizing of representation is the challenge she presents.

### **Elizabeth Bishop and a Poetics of Loss**

McCabe (1994) explains that from a literary perspective,

If modernism and postmodernism have shared a similar excitement in language for itself... the former, even in its vibrant experimentalism, still possesses a faith in the power and adequacy of words that the latter more insistently questions or denies. (xiv)

Both the modern and postmodern share an excitement in the use of language, in the capacity for artistry, but for the postmodernist, the power and adequacy of language is in disrupting modernist ideas embedded in representation. The disruption of representation begins in what McCabe sees as Bishop's "poetics of loss":

*The art of losing isn't hard to master;  
so many things seem filled with the intent  
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.*

Elizabeth Bishop<sup>60</sup>

McCabe explains,

Personal loss permeates Bishop's perception of the world, of her role as artist, lover, and "seer." While bringing into view the unanswerable questions of suffering and faith, [her poem] "Santarém" is a kind of conflux of poetic impulses, with much of the innovations of the earlier career running beside those breakthroughs of the later. There exist no seamless continuity and linear development in Bishop's work (there is always the flux of arrival and departure, embarking and disembarking), but rather fundamental concerns—with loss, with

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<sup>60</sup> "One Art," in McCabe (1994).

isolation and connection, with charting a feminist encounter with tradition—as recurrent as the rhymes of her villanelle. Fort, da.<sup>61</sup> We begin with loss. (250)

The “loss” might be seen simply as a counter position within a modern culture focused on production, accumulation, and excess. Loss is perhaps even anticipated because, as McCabe points out, if the descriptors of modernism are “purpose, design, hierarchy, mastery, presence, center, hypotaxis, metaphor, depth, determinacy, phallocentrism, transcendence,” then they are countered in Bishop through “play, chance, anarchy, silence, absence, dispersal, parataxis, metonymy, surface, irony androgyny, indeterminacy, immanence” (xiv). All these (latter) characteristics infer fragmentation, imperfection and disorder in juxtaposition to the existing order. As McCabe points out though, Bishop’s poetics begins with loss in the sense apparent in Julia Kristeva’s psychoanalytic recognition of the loss of the maternal with the internalization of symbolic language and subjection of the semiotic. Transgressing symbolic signification, the *feeling* of loss is a perpetual reminder to create—*poiesis*—a self, a home.

I wish to focus on Bishop’s disruption of modernist notions of *self* because when representation is called to question, so too is a modernist self. McCabe notes, that Bishop’s poetics of loss,

allows us to see a topography of the self that cannot be limited to individual existence. The personal becomes the communal, and our remembering, like our poems, are moments of the homecoming: temporary alleviation of estrangement but also heightened awareness of the ultimate strangeness of “being” and “family”... The examination of personal history and self, then, does not implement

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<sup>61</sup> Sigmund Freud (1962) describes the “fort, da” game of a child who repeatedly throws his toys away while imitating the sound that indicates “gone” (*fort*, German) and gleefully exclaiming “there” (*da*) when the toy reappears. Freud’s interpretation of the game is that “it was related to the child’s great cultural achievement of the instinctual renunciation (that is, the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction) which he had made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting” (In “*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*,” *Standard Edition*, Vol. 18, 14–15).

fixed identity; within Bishop's poetics of loss, she can only acknowledge a fluid sense of being in the world. (242)

The *topography* of the self—McCabe's phrase—provides a metaphor for discussion of the conceptual borders, boundaries, and geographies of *self*. The metaphor of topography suggests the map/territory relationship, the tendency to conflate the map with the territory, to think of them as one thing standing *mimetically* for another; but as many have pointed out, Gregory Bateson (1979) among them, "the map is not the territory."<sup>62</sup> The metaphor is appropriate, however, for pointing out several aspects of Bishop's poetics. First, reading a map is an impersonal experience, quite unrelated to the physical experience of "being there." But even the "being there" does not guarantee that one can represent. McCabe points out that in her poetry Bishop reiterates, "I have *seen* it," indicating her inability to record objectively immediate experience; "words cannot transparently describe the world" (20). Mimetic representation describes the world; Bishop describes her experience of the world in a *bricolage*, disintegrated, inconclusive, irreducible and uncertain.

The map provides a perspective while the real-life experience has a view, a difference related to objectivity and subjectivity. Bishop "disrupts an aesthetic of impersonality and autonomy by interlacing her life with her art...revealing the difficulty of disentangling the two" (2). The map provides a set of facts and geographical relations. The map seldom changes, continually representing directions, elevations, rivers, mountains, locations. For Bishop there are only relative and transitory borders, flux, uncertainty and instability and these ideas are seen by

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<sup>62</sup> Bateson draws on Alfred Korzybski (1933/1958), a critic of Aristotelian logic who recognized the relationship of that logic to language, and founded a general theory of semantics. It was Korzybski who popularized this aphorism.

the way she troubles self and identity. Beginning with incompleteness, Bishop writes her subjectivity, a reorientation that questions the subject as object and that object as unitary, fully-formed and able to be known. Bishop's self is "homemade," where "home" "is a living thing within her imagination because never completed, arrived at, or substantiated"—any more than *self*; *self* "thrives on the inconclusive and the *impossible*" (McCabe, 234, emphasis added), one that eludes the trap of boundaries, impersonates, refuses categorization. *Homemade* draws on the dimly mis-remembered and therefore is always re-creating. Here the position of the author in relation to the text, and her/his presumed identity, become less a prescription from a modern perspective, that an opportunity from a postmodern perspective—an opportunity to question and "play" with what one has considered fixed, set, real.

The idea of a non-objectified self is one that I will return to in Chapter 4, but here it is enough to say that Bishop's poetry reveals a much more complicated—perhaps even, complex—sense of *self*, one that, borrowing a phrase from Maxine Greene (1994) "re-describes and re-creates the self as life proceeds" (216). Similar to Eco's idea of "open work," the "work" is open ended, and creativity involves not only an aesthetic and artful interpretation of someone else's vision, but using that vision as a springboard for further re-composition. Creativity for Bishop does not reside in comfortably certain places, but rather "from an exile's imaginings and re-creations" (199). Searching, questioning, refusing the categorical allows her to continually re-make self and world as homes.

In his eulogy of W. V. Quine, Richard Rorty (2001) recalls the view expressed by Nelson Goodman to Quine, that

There is no one way the world is, but merely various alternative descriptions of it. Some descriptions are useful for certain purposes, others for other purposes, but none of them is closer to or farther away from reality. (B8)

This is a view that Rorty posits for himself and for John Dewey. In the following section, the structuring of this narrative ordering of the world is ironically also traced to Aristotle's *Poetics*. This is not such a big jump to make, however, as Jonathan Culler notes that the field of literary criticism is indebted to Aristotle. Aristotle then becomes the foundation of both modern and postmodern senses of the poetic (and its companion, *mimesis*).

#### **ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS*: THE ROOT OF ALL**

A. N. Whitehead makes the comment that all of Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato. It is Plato's student Aristotle, however, who puts a lasting twist on the concept of *mimesis* (imitation) and who may be credited with creating poetics, providing a place for poetry, as an art form in Western culture, and a philosophical grounding for poetic representation.<sup>63</sup> The delayed effect of this change, not really noticeable until late medieval times, is that the old poetic becomes a specter. It follows from the death of the Muse, and hovers as the absent presence to remind us that once there was something more—aliveness, spirit, and creativity of the *poiesis* of the poetic—now a threat to the prospect of certainty. In the following sections, I present an accepted interpretation of Aristotle's concept of *mimesis* and its relationship to his ideas about

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<sup>63</sup> Most scholars seem to agree that while Plato took a strong stand against the poets in *The Republic*, he still used poetic devices. Plato saw *mimesis* as an "effective instrument of teaching," "a methodology open to those who cannot muster the rigor for a dialectical quest for ultimate truth" (Golden, 1992, 55). Plato claimed that since the artist is under the influence of the Muse, he has no genuine knowledge himself, but is the deliverer of a "divine message"; an artist is the "practitioner of non-rational cognition" and "the philosopher is the practitioner of rational cognition" (55). *Mimesis*, as artful imitation, was removed from reality, which was itself once removed from ideal forms. In addition, poetry exerted a "subversive [emotional] influence on the character of both individual and state" (41). Aristotle takes a slightly different view, presented later in this chapter.

poetry, art and intellectual thought. With the movement to literacy, that is, representation in textual form, Aristotle keeps the same word, *mimesis*, but changes both the conceptual meaning and practices associated with it. He makes over the old performative re-presentation of cultural knowledge into a newer rational process. *Mimesis* as *techné*, picked up in late medieval times, becomes foundational to schooling and teaching methods. The *art* of teaching is *mimesis* as imitation— or worse, copying. Finally, I point to the poetic in current curriculum studies to suggest that while invoking the poetic may be a call for change, it recalls ancient arguments, replays age-old philosophical arguments, without moving beyond a modernist philosophical —or conceptual— frame.<sup>64</sup>

There is a story that Aristotle was commissioned by Philip (father of Alexander the Great) to compile and organize the knowledge of the Greek world. Aristotle had an assistant, Theophrastus, and many slaves to make this work possible. It was a phenomenal and a complicated task, especially when the country had such a long and contentious history. The culture was rich and varied, strongly oriented aesthetically to beauty and form.<sup>65</sup> *Mimesis*, a concept related to *paideia*, cultural knowledge, was in a period of revision. The historical relationship of *mimesis* (re-presentation) and *paideia* (cultural knowledge) was in the performance by poets of epics in which cultural myths and knowledge were re-presented. This

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<sup>64</sup> Aristotle's *Poetics* and other writings are still subject to much re-interpretation; for my purposes I draw on Greek classicists Leon Golden (1992), Stephen Halliwell (2001) and related to Aristotle's aesthetics, Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz (1970).

<sup>65</sup> "Aesthetics" was not a word used by the Greeks. First use of the word to refer to field or discipline was in the doctoral dissertation of Alexander Baumgarten, *Aesthetics* (1735), in which he "attempt[s] to articulate and defend a new modality of experience" (Martin Jay, 2004, 133); that is, of things perceptible by the senses, things material (as opposed to things thinkable or immaterial) (OED, s.v. "Aesthetic"). Kant, not acknowledging prior use of the term *aesthetics*, but writing on the same topic, refers to it as "critique of judgment" (Tatarkiewicz, 1970, 4). Aesthetics exists today as a discussion of "the beautiful," often associated with "the good," a reflection of cultural values.

tradition, over hundreds of years, changed. Synchronically, literacy changed intellectual thought and cultural practices; poetry was inscribed, theatrical performances were scripted.

In Plato's time, Sophists were poets, rhetoricians, and itinerant teachers who attracted paying students by reciting passages of popular epic poetry. Sophists gathered in the markets and other public places, arguing among themselves concerning passages of poetry and the author's intentions, without a basis for coming to any sound conclusion. Plato held Sophists responsible for inciting public feeling against Socrates, which led to his taking the hemlock. For Plato, these poets were mere copies of the real thing. Hence, in his ideal *Republic*, Plato casts out the poets and reduces *mimesis* (which was previously generally understood to be *poetic* re-presentation) to "copying." Plato even challenged the poetic tradition, questioning the wisdom of poets on the basis that the Muse spoke through the ancient poets and therefore the poet had no knowledge of his own. Although Plato often used myth allegorically in his own writings, he claimed that this art arose from skill, while poetry derived from divine madness. Further, poets did not have true knowledge since it was not *reasoned* knowledge. Plato's views no doubt influenced Aristotle in his considerations of poets, poetry, and knowledge.

In classical Greece, at that time of Plato, intellectuals were literate (Tatarkiewicz 1970; Havelock, 1986) and as such, had lost touch with the performative aspects of the archaic presentation of epics (Nagy, 1996; Martin, 1989; Gentili, 1988; Havelock, 1969). Aspects of the "poetics" of the tradition — evocation, allusion, speaking indirectly, hinting, "the vague, implicit, oracular use of language" (Kingsley, 2004) — were poorly understood; and *mimesis*, once associated with poetic performance and re-presentation, was now associated with "seduction,"

and “deception” (Tatarkiewicz, 111). Poetry was *not* considered an “art”: poets sang their epics, performing the wisdom of Muses, and this wisdom was called *sophia*, the “cognition of the most profound truth” (Tatarkiewicz, 33). As an oral performance, archaic poets produced no material “product,” an important factor for following epistemological theorists such as Aristotle, who was attempting to categorize such enigmatic “wisdom” as *sophia*. The word *sophia* also refers to “art,” but true artists produced a material product and were considered to have objective knowledge of their craft.<sup>66</sup> To classical scholars, archaic poetry was, therefore, not an “art.” “Wisdom” (*sophia*), associated with the sage poets of the past, was now an anachronism. Archaic poets, once thought to be inspirited, and given much the same status as oracles, were now disparagingly thought of as “soothsayers” (Tatarkiewicz, 28, 145).

The arts (*techné*) were practical skills for the classical Greeks, such as carpentry, weaving, painting, sculpture, and architecture. Artists produced a product and had practical knowledge of its production (Tatarkiewicz, 26). Aristotle, a realist, had no patience for soothsaying, but he did believe in man’s nature, his inborn gifts. Thus, partly agreeing, partly disagreeing with Plato, Aristotle, shifted the connotation of the word *mimesis* (re-presentation) away from its archaic association with poetic performances, categorizing poetry as a form of “art.” Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz (1970) explains that for Aristotle,

Good poetry comes about in the same way as any other good art, through talent, skill and exercise, and is subject to rules no less than other arts. Because of this it can be the subject of a scientific study: this study is called “poetics.” (145)

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<sup>66</sup> The objective knowledge of artists has to do with discovering the *kanon*, the natural mathematical proportions, in the art forms they produce: “The Greeks took it for granted that nature and the human body in particular, displays mathematically defined proportions and inferred from this that representations of nature in art must show similar proportions” (Tatarkiewicz, 57).

Aristotle's *Poetics* makes "poetics" the scientific study of poetry. It provides, probably for his students, the guidelines and standards of a good poetic work of art; there was no general conceptual category for literature at that time. He took "Greek epic and tragedy to be definitive masterpieces and regarded the theories which he based upon them as universally and eternally valid" (155). The emerging form for written work, the form of representation—was structured, as Leon Golden (1992) points out, around Aristotle's conceptions of reality, necessity, causation, probability, plot, climax, possibility and appropriate end. A sense of beauty is then achieved through form, order, proportion, harmony, rhythm and *mimesis*. The value of the work of art is judged by its adherence to logical, ethical, and artistic canons—which Aristotle codifies.<sup>67</sup> Artful representations need to be of noble human actions and good poetry should guide students in making sound moral judgments. *Poetics* is also concerned with the cognitive value of arts, and the concept of *mimesis* (imitation of the "noble") explains the way that art functions to develop "good" thought. *Mimesis*, in Aristotle's thought, is both process and product. It is an imitative process; it is a product that represents nature. Appreciation of art, as a representation of nature, plus *ratio*, leads to intellectuality. These progressive levels of intellectuality, hierarchically ordered, are mimetically represented in social structures; as Tatarkiewicz notes, "In art, one man is a craftsman, another an artist, and a third a connoisseur" in relation to expertise of judgment

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<sup>67</sup> Greek *kanon* (canon) is a form by which the artist is bound, a law, and every art has its own canon; architecture, based on mathematics (proportion), served as the master for other arts, although there was variation among them. For example, in sculpture, the canon is based on the proportions of the human body, which was seen as the canon of nature. The artist sought the canon in producing the work, as a guarantee of its perfection. Greek artists "treated their art as a matter of skill and obedience to general rules rather than of inspiration and imagination" (Tatarkiewicz, 24). Greeks, in the classical period of canonical art, had no theory of creation and were oblivious to the idea of a creative individual (Tatarkiewicz, 29).

(150). Aristotle's resurrection of the poetic, after Plato's disparaging treatment, transforms *mimesis* of poetry to a more intellectually purposive art form—with its own canon—the *mimesis* of human nature, and rationalization of social order.

### ***Mimesis***

According to Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz (1970), nowhere does Aristotle define his use of the term *mimesis* (142), but it is generally acknowledged that it was important, not only for Aristotle in his work, but historically and culturally. Stephen Halliwell (2001) maintains that for Aristotle *mimesis* was about how humans “explore their own distinctively human world through hypothetical simulation and enactment of some of its possibilities” (Halliwell, 2001, 88).

*Mimesis* is the human activity of imitation; it is in our human nature to imitate, as children play games, for example, imitating adults, “miming,” pretending—imagining. *Mimesis* is associated with the human desire to know, one of the principle ways of achieving genuine knowledge, “deeply rooted in our very nature” (Golden, 19). In the production of art, *mimesis* is the name given to the process of representing what is seen to be natural and it is a natural tendency to do so. It is both a means (mode) and an intellectual end.

For Aristotle, intellectual thought is developed in two ways, through art and through reason. Imitative art forms are an external realization of a true idea. For Aristotle, art is itself a “body of knowledge capable of yielding universally applicable judgments and is thus significantly superior to mere experience, which is concerned with particulars” (Golden, 1992, 63). Experience in itself is not sufficient for learning in Aristotle's view. One must move from this particularity to the universal.

Golden (1992) explains that for Aristotle there is great pleasure in learning, the pleasure of recognition, the a-ha experience of clarification. Golden explains *katharsis* as an act of intellectual clarification, learning via *mimesis*: “central to all of our experiences...is an act of intellectual insight” elicited by art, that of connecting to the universal (Golden, 39).<sup>68</sup> The epic poems of Homer and the tragedies are poetic art. If it is successful, the art form, *representation*, advances thought to recognition of the universal. In this way, art generates the pleasure of learning and *inference*<sup>69</sup> (19; emphasis added). In the *Poetics* (1448 b 4–17), Aristotle writes:

Two causes appear to have brought poetry into existence and these are natural causes. For the process of *mimesis* is natural to mankind from childhood on and it is in this way that human beings differ from other animals, because they are the most imitative of them and achieve their first learning experiences through *mimesis*, and all human beings receive pleasure through *mimesis*. A proof of this is what happens in reality; for there are some things which are painful to us when we see them in reality, but we take pleasure in viewing the most precise representations of them, for example, the forms of the most despised wild animals and of corpses. The reason for this is that the act of learning is not only most pleasant to philosophers but in a similar way, to everyone else, only others share in this pleasure to a more limited degree. For it is on account of this that we take pleasure when we see representations, because it turns out that in our viewing of

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<sup>68</sup> As Golden (1992) explains, the single concept of *katharsis*, critically important to understanding the value of tragedy (for Aristotle), has several aspects; drawing on a psychoanalytic perspective, he asserts that three senses of *katharsis* are possible and found in Aristotle’s writings: emotional responses to tragedy, ethical lessons to be learned in such dramatic presentations, and a medical-therapeutic curative effect in emotional release. Golden explains *katharsis* in relation to the *pleasure* of learning inherent in *mimesis*: “the highest goal, the end in itself, of music, and of art in general” is intellectual clarification (37).

<sup>69</sup> Halliwell’s (2001) essay concerns the clarification of a misinterpretation of Aristotle’s use of “universals” in connection with poetry and *mimesis*. As Halliwell (2001) explains, Aristotle is guarded in stating the relationship of the poetic to universals, and there are differences between *Poetics* 4 and 9: in section 4 it is clear that “universals must enter into poetry at the larger level of plot-structure and of the whole framework of relationships between the agents, their actions and their characters...” (Halliwell, 98). In section 9, however, Halliwell explains that “understanding poetic universals is a matter of implicit grasp, not of explicit articulation, and this points to an important dimension of the model of human understanding that prevails in Aristotle’s thinking at large” (101). The way I understand this subtlety is that in section 4 one is referring to the necessary qualities of good text; in section 9 one is referring to the cognitive aspect of inference related to interpretation.

them we learn and infer what each thing is, for example that *this is that*.<sup>70</sup> (in Golden, 19; emphasis added)

The art form, the object itself, is of less importance than the value it has leading to *katharsis*, the pleasure of recognition: “For it is not in the object itself that we take pleasure but in the process of making inferences from “this to that” so that it turns out that we learn something” (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1371 b 4–10). The *inference* relates to the imitative nature of art, and because it is an imitation, when we make the connection that “this is that,” there is the pleasure of recognition, a moment of clarity in making the connection. The ultimate success of *mimesis* is judged on its effectiveness in creating the learning experience, that is, on intellectual and emotional pleasure, and in understanding the causes of events (Golden, 63–64).

Noting that “*mimesis* is a tightly structured process involving, in different arts, different means of representation, different manners of communicating that representation to an audience, and different moral and ethical states as the object of artistic representation” (63), there are still qualities necessary for all art forms: the “roots, goal, and essential pleasure of all *mimesis* in the act of learning and inference” (37). In regard to epic and tragic poetry, Aristotle’s “uncompromising demands on art” (Golden 105) include:

psychological necessity and probability as it represents the beginning, middle, and end of a significant human action that this structure serve the needs of the essential *telos* of art in human experience [to move from the particular to the universal]; and that this *telos* be clearly understood as the art of illumination [*katharsis*, “intellectual clarity”] and universalization that naturally and necessarily arises in the properly constructed work of art. (106)

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<sup>70</sup> Aristotle determines an equivalency in “this is that”; however, as William Pinar (2005) notes, curriculum scholar, Tetsuo Aoki (2005) finds a “generative, though ambiguous, ambivalent space” between this *and* that, opening up “edgy spaces, located at margins and boundaries, space of doubling...spaces of generative possibilities” (73). Aoki, and his relationship to the poetic, is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

Aristotle's treatise is an elucidation of the *canon* of poetry; it identifies the nature of poetry as *mimesis*; therefore, poetry, as a literary art, must meet the requirements laid out by Aristotle, for poetic writing. Poetry must represent what is present in nature, must make the connection of "this is that," within the parameters of cause, effect, probability, possibility, and *telos* (appropriate end). While Aristotle does not explicitly deny the significance of subjective experience in his concept of *mimesis*, the idea of creativity, in the sense of *inventio*, (invention), is confined to the realm of the logically possible for the universal *self*. In his cognitive schema, imagination, the natural human tendency to create visual images, is psychologically subordinate to *ratio*, rational judgment. The work of the poet is to represent those logically possible images in text. *Mimesis*, no longer associated with *poiesis* (to create), is now a skill, *techné*. In his schema, *mimesis* refers to an idealized, hierarchical, and linear set of relations among "organism/ word/ environment," oriented to reproducing conformity to existing cultural values.<sup>71</sup>

There is no theory of creativity in classical Greek thought on art; since it is characterized by its *canons*, the value of artistic representation is in its conformity to an external universal standard. So, too, for the individual human being: the need to conform to an existing external, universal standard. Individuality and subjective experience are not a part of this culture; there is no creativity in the way that I might think of it from my contemporary perspective, as "newness," origination, or genesis. Inspiration, intuition, mysticism, and spiritual dimensions associated with

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<sup>71</sup> In curriculum studies, Mary Aswell Doll (2000) provides a critique, based on the literature of Toni Morrison, of the "color blindness" of Aristotelian *mimesis*, i.e., the ignorance of difference, pointing out the connection between the liberal humanism of Eurocentric (White male) thought and the "knowledge enterprise" of education (172–73).

*poiesis* (to create) are simply spectral after Aristotle's re-defining of the poetic arts. In his worldview, in representation, and therefore in reasoned thought, there is only what *is*, "fixed, certain and finished" (Dewey, 1958, 48). As John Dewey (1958) notes, Aristotle looks in the direction of contingency, but does "not go far on [that] road" (48).

What are the implications of Aristotle's poetics? As Øivind Andersen and Jon Haarberg (2001) comment in their introduction to their recently published book, a collection of papers from a conference dealing with Aristotle, the *Poetics* is the "only piece of technical writing from Antiquity that still plays a role in scholarly discourse" (1). Similarly, Martin Jay (1998) suggests, by including the essay "*Mimesis* and Mimetology: Adorno and Lacoue-Labarthe" in his *Cultural Semantics: Keywords of Our Time*, the enigmatic *mimesis* is well-worn intellectual ground. He summarizes the views of several poststructuralists, commenting that for Roland Barthes, *mimesis* is the "conservative reproduction of already existing signs" that produced, for him, feelings of nausea (120); for Paul de Man, it is a trope that confuses "linguistic with natural reality" and "reference with phenomenalism" (120); and for Deleuze and Guattari *mimesis* spurred a "nomadic flight from paranoid despotism" (137). Aristotle's concept of *mimesis*—"an extraordinarily vexed term" (122)—is a central topic of poststructural debates about language, representation, identity, and culture. *Mimesis* now manifests itself in "unexpected" and "catachrestic" ways in postmodern/poststructural thought, Jay explains, because it carries with it residues from various disciplinary fields. The first polysemic cluster revolves around a judgment, questioning:

the value of the "original" model to be mimetically duplicated—variously identified with nature as a nonsubjective other, the active producer of that nature,

the cultural tradition of the ancients, or the reified relations of the modern world.  
(135)

The second point Jay identifies concerns both rationality and the spectacle of performance, each having complex relation to *mimesis* and to conceptualizing practices associated with a “theoretical/theatrical logic based on visual reproduction.” In both, *mimesis* is “an infinite oscillation between original and copy” that creates a “rhythmic repetition without closure,” a rhythm which is an antidote to “the uncanny caesura in a speculative system that seeks to stifle its playful uncertainties (136). A rhythm that resists arrhythmia, the unexpected, the uncanny, the irregular, the rupture of time and motion in which to question, to think, to play.

Jay’s sophisticated philosophical, literary, and psychoanalytic analysis extends problematics I have alluded to above, namely (1) the taken-for-granted idea in *mimesis* in regard to the adequacy of language (symbolic representation) to express “reality”— without regard to “the phenomenal” (Jay, 120)—the sensational and experiential aspects of life; and (2) a question about theories of representation based on universals, ignoring difference, the improbable, and the ineffable. *Mimesis* as a representation of knowledge is confined to the expression of a fixed, external, universalized reality. In its process, *mimesis* is an ongoing back-and-forth between the particular and the universal to identify this is that; it makes possible the statement of what *is*, from a universal perspective. In its end, the statement is a fact; it has a truth value even if, as in the case of poetry, it is allegorical. The two points regarding *mimesis* on which I will focus in the remainder of this chapter concern teaching, specifically: (1) the cultural valuation of product/production through skill development, and (2) the subordination of imagination to rational thought, particularly in the form of text. Both points are relevant to *mimesis*, to “this is that” as a

technology of representation, operating epistemically, validates reproduction of subjects— students— as rational products, historically rooted in schooling practices. These methodized practices, based on Aristotle’s poetics, remained relatively unquestioned from late medieval times (Vico) until the end of the nineteenth century (Peirce).

### **Medieval *Poetics* in Curriculum**

Amidst great social and cultural change and intellectual development in the middle ages, from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries, focusing on the poetic, important as it is, might obscure the critically important interplay of discursive practices in this dynamic time of transition, skewing one’s perspective. For example, Rita Copeland (2002) in her recent research on epistemology and pedagogy tied to discursive practices, notes that Aristotle’s intellectual ideas developed in relation to the prevailing mode of discourse of their time which was *sophistry*, sometimes called *sophistic*. At this time, sophistry was not mere rhetorical word play. The sophists were “the theorists of *logos*, and of knowledge, sense perception, and subjectivism, as well as of ethics, justice and social relations” (113). Sophistry was foundational to ancient Greek thought.<sup>72</sup>

From our current perspective, where modernist rationalism—not sophistic rhetoric—is the dominant discourse, rhetoric is seen as mere performance, the political whipping boy for the

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<sup>72</sup> Copeland points to the persistence of dissent, also called *heresy*, which can be traced to rhetorical practices in the late middle ages. She explains that *sophistic* is embedded in the curriculum throughout the classical and medieval period, in the teaching of grammar, *ars grammatical* (1996, 6). Even in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, sophistry was taught, in universities of England, from Aristotle’s *Sophistical Refutations*, written to expose the fallacies and provide weapons *against* sophistical arguments. Copeland’s thesis is that “English dissident identities of the fourteenth and fifteenth century were formed in the distant and refracted image of a class of rhetorical practitioners who lived in the Athens of the fifth century BC, the immediate contemporaries of Socrates” (113). Such “dissident” identities led to the rebellious uprisings of the Lollard laity against the intellectual clerics over the issue of reading the Bible in the vernacular— a heresy at the time.

rationalist episteme. Similarly, in presenting a reasonable view of rhetoric in the middle ages, Marcia Colish (1983, 1997) quotes noted fifteenth century rhetorician Brunetto Latini, mentor to Dante Alighieri, who claims that rhetoric is not merely the science of speaking but the art of speaking well, “full of noble teaching; and teaching is nothing but wisdom; and wisdom is the understanding of things as they are” (in Colish, 1983, 163).

As the history of Western intellectual thought is often (re-)told, modernity arises from the victory of natural philosophy over groundless rhetoric. Rhetoric is then intellectually devalued; poetry and poetics, embedded in formerly dominant rhetorical discursive practices of education are similarly devalued.<sup>73</sup> A reconstitution of the poetic, based on Aristotle’s poetics, but transformed by Thomas Aquinas, gives greater scope to imagination, and makes possible the emergence of the humanist individual — though not yet a liberal, humanist *self*.<sup>74</sup> In the pursuit of truth and certainty, the creative spirit of the poetic shifts from nature to God. *Mimesis* persists, playing a silent but powerful role in representation.

### **Poetic Practice in Schools**

From the fourth century BCE, the grammarian was the “guardian of language” (Kaster, 1988; Minnis, 1984) who schooled students in grammar. Disciplining students to grammar and the logic of rhetoric, to be the conservators of language, constituted schooling. If students did not

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<sup>73</sup> Linear sequencing of this transition over-simplifies, and obscures the abundance of lyrical and poetic writing produced throughout the middle ages. Troubadours and their ballads, (Nagy, 1996) and market square discourse in *Rabelais* (Bakhtin) attest to the persistence of rhetoric and the poetic in public, everyday discourse, distinguished from—and resistant to— *intellectual* discourse practices. Rationalism, that began with abstraction and generalization of Plato and Aristotle, reached its apex with Rene Descartes.

<sup>74</sup> Individuality was first constituted as a man-to-God relationship; the modern rational *self* emerges when Descartes cuts the cord of dependence between the two. Reason alone will now do; albeit, Descartes does believe the God he knows would not deceive him (Doll, 1993, 26–33)

learn, knowledge was beaten into them (Kaster, 1988, 12–31). This tradition, learning grammar and rhetoric, continued relatively unchanged until the later middle ages (Jardine, 1974, 1975; Copeland, 1996, 2002).<sup>75</sup> In the iconography of the time, symbolically, the grammarian often carries a *flagellum* in his, or her (“Lady Grammar”) hand (Copeland, 1996, 6). The students, for their part, read, memorized and copied the text of the ancient poets, considered the authorities of good speech and writing. Poetry was the “medium of education” in the early middle ages (Colish, 1983, 159). This form of schooling reflects a simplistic sense of *mimesis* as copying or imitation that continued until the late middle ages. Students were drilled, exercised and disciplined—sometimes violently—to create habits that were second *nature*, and in this sense, Aristotelian *mimesis* is apparent, as the “product” re-presents the ideal nature; the student re-presents the canon: Aristotle’s poetic canon. Here I am reminded of the continued presence of re-presentation of the canon (*mimesis*) in the government’s call for national testing.

The exercises were so tedious and mind-numbing that teachers sought teaching materials to captivate student interest. Marjorie Woods (1996) notes that the basic readers for teaching literacy to medieval boys contain passages of sexual imagery and rape from Ovid (*Ars amatoria*), Statius (*Achilleid*), and the anonymous *Pamphilus*. She explains that the content was not only exciting, it was also instructive. Younger schoolboys learned grammar, vocabulary, and sexual “facts.” Older boys, in addition to sexual violence, learned *declamation*, a function of rhetoric, to see things from various perspectives, to learn about power and powerlessness, to deal

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<sup>75</sup> Even in the sixteenth century, Gabriel Harvey, in his 1577 address to Cantabridgians, entitled *Rhetor, a two day speech on Nature, Art, and Practice in the study of rhetoric*, outlines the expectations of students in their study of rhetoric, noting the tripartite components: natural gifts, practice for the development of skills, and imitation.

with anxieties of adolescence and young manhood (69). As Woods points out, predicated on maleness, in an “absolutely patriarchal tradition,” these texts shaped gender identities and victimized women, but were neither simplistic nor psychologically crude (74). They were effective strategies of *mimesis* in reproducing a patriarchal world. Notes Copeland:

The medieval classroom is the historical site where the *ars grammatica* is produced and reproduced as the fundamental program of textuality. Grammar shapes students and their environment, and it is continually shaped in and by student culture. Grammar as a discipline comes into being as it is materially enacted in the classroom. As the most physically embodied of the *trivium* arts (with its emphasis on tongue and mouth for pronouncing words, and the formation of letters inscribed on parchment or wax by fingers correctly holding pens), it is also enacted on and through the bodies of the students learning its rules. (2001, 6)

The totality of discipline in education, shaping thought and body, is a point that Michel Foucault (1995) makes in *Discipline and Punish*, one I would not have associated with poetry *per se*; however, slavish adherence to the authority of authors is behind the idea of education in the language arts until the twelfth century (Minnis, 1984), and continues today in adherence to the authority of textbooks. In education, the curriculum for teaching grammar was the study of Latin authors (*auctores*); medieval teachers wrote commentaries (*auctoritas*), or glosses, on the *auctores*. Alastair Minnis’s (1981, 1984) research on these commentaries indicates a singularly consistent theory of literary analysis. A teacher’s first lecture provides a prologue to the commentaries, at the beginning of a course, studied along with segments of the literature itself. The great poets were the authorities that were studied and imitated.

Education in grammar, according to Priene (84 BCE), is founded on literary culture “through which souls progress toward excellence and the condition proper to humanity” (in

Kaster, 1988). The cultural value placed on education was a commonplace, reflecting the belief that excellence and humanity are achieved through education, and “one not so educated was less than human” (15). Education in the literary tradition provided access to the sacred and therefore set one apart, reinscribing a hierarchical social order. Robert Kaster (1988) further describes the value of education using two “common but antithetical” metaphors:

In one [metaphor] the literary culture was a mystery, of the Muses or the ancients; its acquisition was an initiation, by which “the things not to be spoken” were revealed...convey[ing] the sense of distinction shared by an elect. But insofar as initiation in a mystery implies a transfiguring revelation, a passive experience, an irreversible change, the recurrent cast of thought does little to convey the reality of the literary education; its true character is more accurately captured by the second metaphor, at once more common and more consequential. The school of literature is “the gymnasium of wisdom, where is shown the path to the blessed life.” The literary education is the “gymnastic of the soul”; the literary culture, a matter of training achieved through “the sweat of the Muses.” The process was gradual, painstaking—and painful. Like the athlete trained in the old gymnasium, the student of literature slowly acquired his knowledge and skills by replacing unrefined habits with good habits until these (ideally) became second nature. (quoting Pirene, 16–17)

Education was hard achieved, set one apart, in a class unto themselves, and won a place for the victor with a select few whose souls who were prepared for “excellence and humanity.” The literary tradition that Kaster refers to is the teaching of Latin, the language of education, through the ancient poems. Poetry and poetics are the material and the method of curriculum used to teach stylistics of oral speech, such as rhythm, rhyme, grammar and vocabulary. Until approximately the twelfth century, moral lessons, too, were learned directly through poetry and poetics. As such, this classical curriculum is a methodological technology, a teaching tool, effectively influencing the body as well as the mind.

## RECASTING THE POETIC

In their respective research on medieval scholastics, Alastair Minnis (1981, 1984), Donnalee Dox (2003), Marcia Colish (1983, 1997), Rita Copeland (1996, 2001, 2002) and Colin Morris (1972) detail confluences and controversies in this period of time: a re-discovery of Aristotle's writings, a movement away from the old poetic method of analyzing text, and a reconfiguring of literary analysis to coincide with theological perspectives on Biblical exegesis. In this transformational late medieval period, 1100–1300, the mimetic study of classics is reconsidered, leading to an acceptance of writing in the vernacular, and a greater role for *imagination* in reason. This time period is often referred to as the first humanist revolution.

Colish (1983, 1997) and Copeland (2001, 2002) both emphasize that in this later medieval period scholastics and other intellectuals began to write in the vernacular. Colish and Copeland explore the significance of the common language on development of thought, but also the controversies caused by “popularizing” intellectual thought in the vernacular. Colish points out that twelfth century scholastic Bernard of Chartres “was alert to the dangers of passive imitation and even the plagiarism that might result from the mere veneration of past models”; he sought to teach techniques that would make the canons merely a touchstone for students, and encouraged the vernacular “to give them their personal voices, so that students can develop styles that are correct, elegant, and their own” (1997, 178). Curriculum under Bernard, as with other scholastics, began to change, to encourage the voicing of individual thoughts, often about the relationship between the individual and God, about which one could only *speculate*.

Rhetoric and poetic literary methods did not simply and easily give way to logic and metaphysics, nor did a classical arts curriculum (*trivium* plus *quadrivium*) die out. Rather, the study of grammar and the explication of classical *auctores* (authors) led to “speculative analysis of the theoretical structures of language,” and “theologians and Bible-scholars elaborat[ed] a comprehensive and flexible interpretative model for the diverse literary styles and structures supposed to be present in sacred Scripture.” Differences among the books of the Bible were difficult to explain using old methods; a better mode of analysis was necessary to account for “the diverse roles or functions—both literary and moral—believed to be performed by the human *auctores* of the Bible” (Minnis, 1984, 3).<sup>76</sup>

While poetry was previously acknowledged as fiction, it was the kind of fiction that *imitates* truth, which may contain natural or moral truths. Truths could be gleaned from poetic texts by allegorical reasoning. Dox explains that while poetry was thought of as “linguistic artifice” (46) and “decorative fiction,” truths were “obliquely expressed.” Poetic methods could be used, it was thought, “to discern truth from falsehood even when language was acknowledged to represent things existing only in imagination” (Dox, 46).<sup>77</sup> For Aquinas, as for some other

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<sup>76</sup> From medieval scholastic glosses, Minnis determines a progression among scholastics toward speculative philosophy. *Knowledge*, once sought through contemplative practices by “following a path inward through the soul to the imprinted universal” (Timothy Reiss, 1982, 59), was now associated with speculative process, increasingly involving *imagination*. Knowledge is derived from rational reasoning, but imagination —speculation— is the handmaiden to reason in medieval scholastic thought. Thomas Aquinas, among others, drew upon Aristotle, combining theology and philosophical reasoning, suggesting that the capacity to form concepts and abstract ideas is intrinsic to human nature (Colish, 1997, 297). In Aquinas’s natural philosophy, *nature* is explained, one way or another, as attributable to the influence of God, also, *supernature*.

<sup>77</sup> Hermannus Alemmanus’s *Middle Commentary* on Aristotle’s writings surfaced and were of great interest to the scholastics. In these documents, *Poetics* was included along with the *Organon*, and was therefore thought to be a work on logic (Dox, 46). Alemmanus makes poetry to be “the art of making statements in imitation of ideas, images and aspects of human conduct” and poetics is “the study of the composition of imitative statements and their relationship to truth, [that is]... the art of logic.” Poetics becomes, for Alemmanus, “the method for discerning truth

scholastics, however, since (classical and epic) poems deal with fables and illusions, they cannot express the truths grasped by discursive reasoning. Poets use allegorical or symbolic method falsely because poetry has no claims to truth. On the other hand, allegorical or symbolic methods are used rightly by theologians and exegetes because God himself placed several levels of meaning in the Bible, and allegory is simply the way in which exegetes discover what is already present in the inspired text. “Speculative theology may use a symbolic method because its object [God’s meaning] transcends discursive reason” (Colish, 1983, 160).

Classical poetry and its poetics were devalued because answers to problems confronting scholastics concerning the nature of man and his relationship to God were not to be found in the tradition. Therefore, analysis shifted from the rhetorical/poetic tradition where meaning was found by analogy, to metaphysical/logical analysis (under the influence of Aristotle’s *Poetics*), that was directed toward finding God’s influence in the text.<sup>78</sup> As Michel Serres has commented, it is always important to have God on one’s side in any discursive analysis—rational or speculative (1983, Chapter 2).

### **Imagination and Individuality**

In Aquinas’s metaphysical approach, Aristotle’s *nature* is transformed: nature is God’s creation. Creating is, then, for Aquinas, associated with the supernatural—God or his Holy Spirit. Man creates through God’s grace, and man’s creating is only a pale imitation of God’s

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in language” (in Dox, 47), a form of non-demonstrative logic (51), the aim of which is to move the soul to produce judgment (49). Alemannus’s commentary on Aristotle introduces a new logic and vocabulary to literary analysis, one that Thomas Aquinas takes to, even though Aristotle is “pagan.”

<sup>78</sup> Hermannus Alemannus included Aristotle’s *Poetics* with the *Organon*, making it a work of *logic*. Thomas Aquinas, drawing on Aristotelian (Alemannus’s) commentaries, pronounces poetry “subrational,” and “incapable of signifying truth” and therefore previous poetical methods of analysis are discredited. In biblical exegesis, analogy was still used, however, it was now to discover truth, that is, God’s meaning in the text.

creating. Aquinas's rational theology combines faith and reason. *Mimesis* becomes the process of looking to God (not Aristotle's universal), and directing one's thoughts and actions in imitation of His ways.

Imagination takes a significantly expanded role in Thomas Aquinas's *natural* philosophy. Imagination, related to the passions, stimulated by the physical senses, is interpreted as God's grace and a natural form of intelligence. In medieval scholastic thought, imagination is "thinking which produced not certainties but possibilities, often in areas where certainty could not be reached" (Minnis, 1981, 79). Logically, it was considered that, "Something can be known of incorporeal realities, which themselves have no phantasms or images, by comparison with sensible things of which there are phantasms" (81); the Holy Spirit may reveal itself as a sensory *experience*, a revelation, often associated "a far-sighted grasp of a situation" and with speculative problem-solving (78). Where one could not be certain, one needed to speculate. Characteristics of imagination such as speculation and initiative to solve problems led to new ways of thinking about practical situations.

While the value of the poetic tradition depreciated, the poem, itself, in the form of hymns, developed as an expression (representation) of the poet's theological, communal thoughts and feelings (Colish, 162) and as an expression of shared feeling, bringing people together in *sensus communis*, recognizing the *humanity* of mankind, God's creation and spirit in each man's nature. In Aquinas' metaphysics, the individual, via imagination, a manifestation of God's spirit, had a personal "lord-man" bond with God. In addition, a man was united with *natural* men who believed in the Holy Spirit.

Colin Morris (1972) claims that two significant factors that allow for individuality as a concept to come into being are the rediscovery of Aristotle's writings and the theological intellectual work of the scholastics, particularly St. Thomas Aquinas. Significantly, for Morris,

The revolution of thought in the thirteenth century created the possibility of a natural and secular outlook, by distinguishing between the realms of nature and *supernature*, of nature and grace, of reason and revelation. Thanks to the union of Aristotle and Christianity in the works of Aquinas, it was henceforth possible to look at man *either* as a natural being *or* as a being designed for fellowship with God, whereas before the former could not be conceived separately from the latter. From this time onwards, the objective study of the natural order was possible. (161)

Recognizing differences between men, between "natural" and "secular" men, led to the recognition of individuals as either like or different. Individuality is an achievement of the late middle ages. This individual is not yet autonomous, for he is dependent on God, a subject of God.

For Morris, the "objective study of the natural order," as Galileo did so brilliantly, is the final step necessary for the conceptualizing practices of *modernity*: the individual, viewing the world as object, analyzing it in reference to his (her) perspective and pronouncing upon it (Reiss, 1982). Knowledge, no longer associated with inward contemplation and the realization of the universal present in the soul, is apprehended in relation to a world seen outside of oneself, but reflexively having an impact on an objectified *self*.

## **CHAPTER 4 *POIESIS*: TO CREATE AS BEING IN THE WORLD**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout its history, from Aristotle on, poetic thought, as imagination, has increasingly been categorized as auxiliary to rationality. G. E. R. Lloyd (1999) explains that in the development of scientific thought—that is, organized, methodized reason—Greek scholars eliminated factors of contingency, those dealing with the vicissitudes of life and nature, to focus on increasing the probability of certainty, a criteria of sound thought. Reasoned certainty came to define intellectual thought (Dewey, 1929). The rational field of reason, over time, narrowed intellectual thought to such an extent that other discursive possibilities become not only improbable, but virtually impossible to ponder. In creating a bifurcation between the rational and the poetic, a hierarchical relationship was established. Thus, the “poetic” is now associated negatively, as it is in *Roget’s Thesaurus*, with *rambling, desultory, unsystematic*. The poetic is not, in the “modern” world, rational, scientific, logical thought; at best, in its creative and imaginative aspects, it is an auxiliary to such “real” thought.

Tracing the poetic to Aristotle’s interpretation of the concept of *mimesis* leads to a fuller understanding of his ideas—and subsequent modern rationalist ideas— about education, and the inter-connectedness of education with moral and political values. In a modern rationalist episteme, poetics is associated with “representation”; representations are also “operative metaphors for cultural production.” Aristotle’s *Poetics* is, for example, not simply a treatise on art; as a metaphor for cultural production it also “generates and structures a differential set of power relations” (Dougherty and Kurke, 1993, 6–7). Hierarchical relations are reproduced

through education founded on simple Latin translations of *mimesis* as “copy” and on Plato’s, and more importantly, Aristotle’s, revision of the concept of *mimesis*, which led to an institutionalized understanding of education as imitation. As Jeffrey Walker (2000) notes, *mimesis* as “this is that” “allegorically figures forth” or “represents general truths and aligns those truths with an *appropriate emotion, mood or attitude that the well-bred observer may properly entertain*” (286; emphasis added). Education sets students apart as the learned, elevating their status. At the same time, students are in production, preparing—being disciplined—to mimetically reproduce a hierarchical society.

Widening the panorama in search of a broader understanding of the poetic, that is, understanding the poetic from the perspective of a culture organized around the wisdom of poets, I explore literature on mytho-poetic cultures. I search, as did Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, to understand the poetic from the perspective of those archaic cultures, prior to the Greek rationalists, Plato and Aristotle. Inquiring into a different episteme, with different conceptualizing practices, I draw on studies in cultural anthropology, particularly those using critical theoretical research approaches developed in Renaissance studies, that view all texts and other forms of representation —ritual, art, performance— as “sites for the circulation of cultural energy and for the ongoing negotiation of power relations within society” (Dougherty and Kurke, 7). This approach, called *cultural poetics*,<sup>79</sup> lends itself well to an inquiry into discursive relations implied by the organism/word/environment construal, especially in a primarily oral society, historically located prior to textualization. As Dougherty and Kurke (1993) explain, “later texts

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<sup>79</sup> Dougherty and Kurke attribute the term “cultural poetics” to Stephen Greenblatt, an early “new historicist.”

record, though they do not seem to understand, earlier “systems of signification.” Therefore, in this research into archaic, pre-literate cultural practices, texts from later periods may be “mined” for metaphorical evidence (6). In the previous chapter, I drew on Alastair Minnis (1981, 1984) and Rita Copeland (1996, 2001), both of whom use a cultural poetics approach in analyzing Renaissance texts. In this chapter, I refer to Gregory Nagy (1996) who “mines” literature concerning medieval French troubadours to find metaphors of signification to illustrate both the *poiesis* and *mimesis* of archaic poets.

The challenge for such an inquiry is in trying not to read the past in terms of the present. The pre-Socratic poetic is a conceptualizing practice, with its own set of pre-literate relations, that, as Timothy Reiss (1982) and Stanley Tambiah, (1990) remark, we of the modern—or postmodern—Western world, can hardly imagine.<sup>80</sup> From the descriptions I put forward, related to aspects of a mytho-poetic culture oriented by *poiesis* (to create, to make, to do), an impression of the construal of relations will hopefully emerge.

In this chapter, in Part One, I look at the poetic in pre-Platonic and archaic Greece; drawing on these descriptions I develop the idea of *poiesis* as a mode of thought integrally related to *being* in the world—therefore, thought plus action— that leads to creativity, looking at, first, the environment; second, the word; third, the organism. In Part Two, I “point in the direction” (Aoki, 2005,190), toward the incredible dynamics of this construal considered as play:

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<sup>80</sup> Even greater than the challenge of not reading the past in terms of the present, is trying to “represent” *poiesis*, not in terms of a modern rational poetics. What does representation mean in primarily oral cultures? How does one “logically” represent dynamical processes? As Brent Davis (2004) points out, “explanation” is a word that derives from Euclidian geometry, that it flattens out—planes—the object that it may be symbolically logical. Just as Aristotle’s poetics rationally ignored what could not be explained through causal relationships, explanations suffer from simple, linear, literary expression.

“a disclosure that allows us a glimmer of the essence of [*poiesis*]. In proceeding, I want not to create a strong binary between conceptualizing practices, *poietic* versus rationalist, choosing one over the other; but rather, suggest that modern poetics is an *artifact*, one that could even be graphed as a *seriation* of *mimesis*. The exploration here is an *archeology* to understand a set of relations: “organism/ word/environment” in a past *poietic* culture.<sup>81</sup> Understanding these relations may provide insights for existing educational practices based on *mimesis* that are interested in reform.

## **PART 1 POIESIS PAST**

Etymologically, the word poetic is traced to *poiesis*, the archaic word for the action of creating, an infinitive verb, “to create.” Martin Heidegger more eloquently states—“to call into being” is a *poiesis*. In this section, I look at *poiesis* in relation: “environment,” referring to *culture*, “word” referring to *representation*, and “organism” referring to an individual in this culture where *mimesis* is an altogether different—and yet remotely similar—concept.

### **Environment**

In a *poietic* environment, the universe is full of signs; its reading and interpretation is organized by resemblance in patterns. This is why Timothy Reiss (1982) uses the phrase “discourse of patterning” to refer to the discourse of mythopoetic cultures. The culture I refer to specifically, one whose dominant discourse is a “discourse of patterning,” is the culture in

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<sup>81</sup> N. Katherine Hayles (1993) uses the archeological terms *seriation* and *artifact* heuristically to explain change that occurs not as paradigm shift (Kuhn) and not as a new episteme (Foucault) “suddenly springing into being across a wide range of cultural sites” but rather, “through overlapping patterns of innovation and replication” (443). The idea of “patterns of innovation and replication” is remarkably similar to a pre-Socratic *mimesis*. For Foucault, archaeology “reconstructs systems of practices” (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, 256).

archaic Greece, that was organized, I suggest, around the poetic tradition and its myths.

Therefore, I call it a mythopoetic culture, and to distinguish *this* poetic from the Aristotelian poetic, I refer to it as *poiesis* or *poietic*.

In a mythopoetic culture, which is primarily oral, there is, to begin, an assumption of “sympathy between all things as a sign of a universal vitalism” (Reiss, 49). This *vitalism* is an energy that flows through all things, bringing *contiguity* (Tambiah, 1990), a flowing together that forms an unbroken sequence in time and uninterrupted expanse in space. There is a systemic wholeness to this world. A discourse of patterning functions “to make the world say what it has to say, both through its motions and its proportions” (Reiss, 49); it is a dynamic system of patterns and transformation that “makes it possible to deal with unresolvable differences and contradictions” (49) in a relational manner.

An encompassing one-ness characterizes a mythopoetic culture. It is an inter-subjectivity that Stanley Tambiah (1990) calls simply “participation,” referring to (1) sociocentrism, being a person in the world and a product of the world; (2) a continuity of time and space through the process of recollection, variation and looking to the future; and, (3) understanding developed in and through negotiation and a relational logic developed through interaction (109).<sup>82</sup> This cosmological wholeness in archaic and primarily oral cultures, or even yet, in present-day hunter-gatherer cultures, challenges modern day concepts of *time* and *spirituality* (Hugh Brody, 2001). The past is in the present; the spirits, the divine, gods, goddesses and the fates are real and

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<sup>82</sup> The selections in this list are excerpted from a chart comparing concepts and characteristics associated with Tambiah’s two orderings of reality, causality and participation. “Causality” is a strong factor in Aristotle’s philosophical thought. Tambiah places these “orderings” on a theoretical continuum.

present. In the Homeric “atmosphere “everything is at once persuasive and mysterious, natural and marvelous, human and divine” (Paulo Vivante, 1970, 32).

Stability and meaning in such a culture are achieved by recognizing patterns and rhythms in traditions and in speech. Recognition by “pattern” means that *bundles* of relations must be seen (Reiss, 1982), rather than one set of relations, or isolated events. All situations are contextual; looking at the “bigger picture” takes on new meaning. One is not considering the present ramifications of a single event; one is in the poietic culture, looking at this event as a bundle of relations over time.

As Jeffrey Walker (2000) notes, meaning is also *felt*. Explaining the power of ancient rhetoric, Walker discusses the “suasive”-ness of epideictic (poetic speech), that draws on the authority of timelessness, equivalence in the rhythms and patterns of phrasing, and cultural permanence achieved through memorability of archival knowledge. While epideictic “with its archival rhythmic psychogogy of oral/archival discourse can be deeply conservative—even oppressive” (10), poets exhibit a great degree of creative freedom. Poets are “not constrained to be the mouthpiece of traditional knowledge” (12). Revision and revival function as a medium for both the exercise and contestation of authority and social power (12). A cultural value is placed on fluidity and flexibility within a set of relations.

## **Word**

From his research on Homeric epics, linguist and cultural anthropologist Gregory Nagy (1996) points out, *mimesis*, as it was pre-Socratically associated with poetic performance, means “re-presentation,” with the connotation of “re-enactment.” To understand the archaic Greek

*poiesis* as “to create” in a mythic, oral society, says Nagy, one must understand it as performance; to understand the value and purpose of performance, one must understand *mimesis* as re-enactment; and embedded in this understanding of *mimesis* is the concept of *paideia*. The *paideia* (education, particularly, cultural education) of the community—its values, beliefs and attitudes—was influenced by the community’s participation in the poetic performance. Nagy explains that a “definite goal,” a telos, is a part of mimetic (re-enacted) performance. Nested in the semantics of the word *mimesis* is deuk-/duk, the Greek root word for education (*educere* in Latin), which means draw continuously forward—not pulling or pushing—toward a definite goal, in a future direction, toward maturity or, perhaps, to a stage of initiation, which marks achievement.

The inter-connectedness of these words and concepts—*poiesis*, *paideia*, *mimesis*—in light of cultural values placed on interrelations is perhaps to be expected; but additionally it is a function of orality, the fact that the culture is organized without an orientation to literacy. Eloquence and ability with language carries with it authority (Walker, 2000, 10). Language is highly contextual and interpretive. There is a surplus of meaning (Ong, 1982) and meaning can be played with. Later in this section, I will focus on “play” and use the concept to discuss the dynamics of *poiesis* in relation to *self*.

“Word” is oral in archaic Greece, and representation is organized relationally around rhetoric— speeches, poetic performances, and rituals play a large role. There are two main kinds

of rhetorical discourse, the poetic and the pragmatic. It is on poetic performance that I focus because of its connection to education and *mimesis*.<sup>83</sup>

The poets were the sages, the wisemen, and at first, the performers of their poems. They were the first eloquent speakers and the history of rhetoric begins with the poets. They trained others to compose and perform, the *rhapsodes*. The great poets created poems that were re-created in performance and honored for centuries. The composing of a poem, although formulaic in many ways, was also improvisational in its re-enactment, in accordance with the dramatized myths and the memory of the community. The poet's ability to "read" and respond to his audience was crucial. From the audience's point of view, the poet's words, deeds, and portrayal of characters needed to ring true; he needed to meet their expectations—and he had to provide entertainment; therefore some element of novelty was needed in the telling (singing). The audience was active, not passive, in their viewing of the performance. The performance was always in the context of a contest, either with the audience or other poets. The livelihood and reputation of the poet depended on the performance.

Each performance in an oral culture is a *poietic* re-enactment that involves pulling the past into the present, recollection, and re-presenting with variation, since each performance was intended to improve upon the past, to have a sense of novelty. James Olney (1984), drawing on hermeneuticist Paul Ricoeur, provides another perspective on recollection and *poiesis*:

Memory creates the significance of events in discovering the pattern into which those events fall. And such a pattern...will be a teleological one bringing us, in

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<sup>83</sup> Jeffrey Walker (2000) outlines the history of rhetoric in antiquity; the practical business of law and civics derive from pragmatic rhetoric, *basileus*.

and through narration, and by an inevitable process, to the end of all past moments which is the present. (47)

*Poiesis*, in the recollection, plays with time in that it “characterizes the story as made out of events”; and it “construes significant wholes out of scattered events” (Ricouer, in Olney, 1984, 47). The story pulls the past into the present, and in *poiesis*, the variation stands in relation to the future, for the future will draw on this variation. Gregory Nagy (1996) explains this *variation* as the “same thing but...a new instance of the same old thing” (52); seeing in different ways, as in seeing a sunset, different each evening. *Poiesis* entails a fundamental instability of form, but continuities evolve from “patterns of many kinds” (51–54), rhythms, rhyme-schemes, and patterns of events. Nagy’s description of a “fundamental instability” might be likened to the “fluidity” of orally patterned thought developed by Walter Ong (1982). Ong discusses “continuity with change” in oral cultures as a “continuing present” (49). Since history is only as long as memory, the distant past must slip away, to be re-created in the present.

Nagy (1990, 1996a, 1996b)<sup>84</sup> “mines” the medieval songs of Jaufré Rudel, prince of Blaye, in Provence, which were collected, transcribed and published by Rupert T. Pickens in 1978. In mining these texts, Nagy searches for metaphorical evidence of systems of signification relevant to the oral performance of epics.<sup>85</sup> He develops the idea of *poiesis* in relation to *mimêsis*

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<sup>84</sup> Gregory Nagy, classicist, linguist, and anthropologist, explains in *Homeric Questions* (1996b) that studying questions related to Hellenic times demands a multi-disciplinary approach. His own work follows the work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, who pioneered the anthropological study of epic poetry and the notion of *orality* in cultures. Common questions, such as, How were the epic poems composed, remembered, spread throughout Greece, without being written, are a reflection of our present dependence upon text.

<sup>85</sup> Rupert Pickens’s inquiry concerns authorship of traditional songs; similarly Nagy is interested in authorship in epic traditions (Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, 1996b). Nagy inquires into medieval Provençal oral performance traditions, Celtic traditions and Homeric epic poetry, to provide a stronger basis for theorizing the *poietic* process of composition in Homeric times.

in primarily oral traditions. In the 8th century, he notes, the composer/performer created the poem, and this creating, *poiesis*, although formulaic, in accordance with myths and the cultural history of the community, was improvisational.

In *Poetry as Performance* (1996), Nagy identifies the image of the nightingale, common to medieval Provençal, to Celtic, and to Homeric poems, as the metaphorical signifier of the *poiesis-mimesis* relationship. The nightingale sings his song, never finalizing—each a re-composition, and re-presentation of the same, but varied, song—as does the oral performer. Nagy suggests that where the nightingale is brought forward, the performer is actually talking about the poet’s method of re-creation and re-presentation—*mimêsis*—which is *not* a replication and *not* an imitation—but is varied with each performance.<sup>86</sup>

The performance of Homeric epics, which served as a *paideia* (cultural education) for centuries, led to the development of a highly skilled, creative culture. *Poiesis*, as the translation “to create” implies, is a dynamic process, in which a number of variables contribute to its energy, involving a plexus of actions and interactions: of the players, the poet, the chorus, and the audience; time: the mythic past, the present, and the future; the senses: speaking, hearing, seeing, and feeling; and inter-subjectivities: gods, goddesses, heroes, and mortals.

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<sup>86</sup> In oral traditions, the song varies in its composition, varies as it passes from one performer to another, and again for each local audience. Variations in the song (poem), termed *mouvance*, a word predicated on oral tradition, differ by degree and kind, and are inconsistent—perhaps, at times, even unpredictable. *Mouvance* is a condition of *poiesis*. The fluid nature of songs (poems) and their singing (performance) persists until the orality of the tradition becomes obsolete, and songs are fixed in written text. Nagy illustrates the fluidity with the example of the French troubadours’ songs and the jongleurs who popularized—and changed—them. By comparing versions of Rudel’s songs, Nagy is able bring forward the (probable) origins of an authorization process, one which depended upon both the authenticity of the composer and the approval of the audience (1996a: 19).

The flow of this energy is circular, not uni-directional, for example, does not flow from the poet as an authority, *down* to the audience. The *agonistic* nature of orality is a competitive tension that fires up performance and its creativity requires feedback and reflexivity. In this sense, *poiesis* has a “double nature”: for example, first the audience is moved between enchantment (captivated, under a spell) and “synthesizing,” meaning, two different “states of mind” (George Walshe, 1984), but which contribute to their reflexivity. The second example of the double nature of *poiesis* is related to the flow of energy achieved by the production itself, the staging of the epic performance, highlighting the contrast between near and far, foregrounding and backgrounding characters against a sociohistorical context (Richard Martin, 1989); simultaneously, the chorus and audience, the “present” respondents/interlocutors, interact with the mythic past. The audience member is drawn out of themselves, their energy flowing outward, toward the events enacted on stage, reacting to the performance; and energy from the performer is absorbed, drawn into, as the viewer receives this variation of the tale. This active engagement and participation, giving and receiving, attention and reflection, is a part of a poietic *mimesis* that is *paideia*, being drawn out of oneself, drawn continuously forward toward a definite goal. There is no sense of being trapped by the rhythmic back-and-forth copying process of *mimesis* that Martin Jay talks about (see chapter 3). The poet-performer, the viewer, each allows oneself to be drawn in to the movement, to find the play, the slip, in a situation, to be in the movement, and to work with the movement, to find—to create—variations. How the individual *self* (organism) is conceived in this culture, is key to understanding the circulation of energy in this culture.

## Organism: A Poietic Self

Foucault's concept of "care of the self" is based on his research of a classical Greek phrase *epimeleia heautou*, a powerful idea that means "working on or being concerned with something." Implied in this two-word phrase, is "management," "responsibility," and "caring"; the phrase "describes a sort of work, an activity; it implies attention, knowledge, technique" (in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, 243). For Foucault, care of the self reflects the attitude of classical Greeks toward the role and responsibility of the individual; he discusses this notion in terms of technique, ontology, ethics.<sup>87</sup>

In [pagan] Greek ethics people were concerned with their moral conduct, their ethics, their relations to themselves and to others...ethics was not related to any social—or at least to any legal—institutional system. (231)

Care of the self "is not imposed on the individual by means of civil law or religious obligation, but is a choice about existence made by the individual. People decide for themselves whether or not to care for themselves" (244).<sup>88</sup> Ethics is related to aesthetics in this pagan culture; Foucault asks, why couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? (236). By connecting ethics and aesthetics with *being*, one's *self* becomes a creating, a *poiesis*.

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<sup>87</sup> As Foucault points out, there is no "normalization" of this ethics, for two reasons: first, it was a personal choice; second, it was reserved "for a few people in the population; it was not a question of giving a pattern of behavior for everybody" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 230). Foucault develops care of the self drawing on a wide range of Greek literature, carrying forward themes of *austerity* and *mastery* that were picked up by Christianity. In the following paragraphs I have put together extracted references concerning the care of the self from an interview with Paul Rabinow.

<sup>88</sup> Gregory Bateson (1958), in *Naven*, is clearly struck by the fact that the Iatmul people have no formal system of laws; coming from a still Victorian England as a young man, it was a shock to find that the society still had an organization—a complicated, if not "complex," one. Many of the concepts that Bateson subsequently develops concerning how systems work—learning systems, social systems—germinated from this period. David Bogen (1999) brings forward similar views to Bateson's, regarding self-organizing systems, although from a different theoretical perspective.

The performance provides an opportunity, a venue for seeing, for hearing the traditional words, and for developing skills in the art of living, “a training of oneself by oneself... a traditional principle to which [is] attributed great importance” (246), and the aim of which is to “establish as adequate and as perfect a relationship of oneself to oneself as possible” (247). “The one who cares for himself has to choose among all the things that you can know... only those kinds of things which were relative to him and important to life” (243)—a two-fold recognition. What knowledge is necessary? —“knowledge of the world, of what is the necessity of the world, the relation between world, necessity, and the gods” (244). “There [is] a kind of *adequation* between all possible knowledge and care of the self” (244; emphasis added).

One technique for “the art of living,” that is, for “the care of the self,” involves, a “retiring into oneself, reaching oneself, living with oneself, being sufficient to oneself” —a *reflection*, contemplation. This is a practice of *being* based on the “recognized value of the already-said... [in] the recurrence of discourse” (247). This contemplation leads to an ontological knowledge, being a “contemplation of the soul.” Foucault, in an example of “mining” later texts, draws on an example from Plato:

Plato asks, “How can the eye see itself?” The answer is apparently very simple, but in fact it is very complicated. For Plato, one cannot simply look at oneself in a mirror. One has to look into another eye, that is, one *in* oneself, however in oneself in the shape of the eye of the other. And there, in the other’s pupil, one will see oneself: the pupil serves as a mirror. And, in the same manner, the soul contemplating itself in another soul (or in the divine element of the other soul) which is like its pupil, will recognize its divine element. (249)

Foucault continues, explaining how the contemplative aspect of the care of the self leads beyond the self:

This idea that one must know oneself, i.e. gain ontological knowledge of the soul's mode of being, is independent of what one could call an exercise of the self upon the self.... This technique of contemplation uses as [one's] object the soul of an other. (249)

The *self* creates reflexively, therefore, by looking both inward and outward, seeing oneself in the other. *Self* in this sense is not an object, but rather a site of reflexivity and connection— with the other and with tradition—and a site of transformation as one moves toward as “adequate and perfect” a *self* as possible. To create, *poiesis*, is a cultural value.<sup>89</sup>

### **The *Poietic* as a Dynamic Construal**

Although I have described the environment, word, and organism elements that comprise the construal of *poiesis* as a mode of thought, the “more-ness” that has been implied, but not yet described, is the dynamism of the interaction. The interaction is what adds the life or “spirit” (Doll, 1993, 2003, 2005). For Heidegger, that dynamism is *poiesis*, a source of power, related to playing with words and ideas: but play goes further. It is interaction that provides the circumstances for the emergence of the new and for the transformation of *self*. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1986/1998), in an intricate series of steps, relates performance to play, and this description is most appropriate to the dynamism and creativity achieved through play. As he says:<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> When Katherine Hayles (1994) develops the notion of reflexivity in relation to cybernetics and the Macy Conferences, she begins by describing it as “precisely what enables information and meaning to be connected” (450); but this “man-in-the-middle” position leads to input/output “black box functioning” psychological and psychoanalytic discussions. In the context of the Macy conference discussions, reflexivity is divorced from the homeostatic feedback loop concept and, drawing on Humberto Maturana's work, it is associated with *autopoiesis*, thereby providing a conceptual space for creativity through self-organization. About this Hayles says: “Maturana defined a self-organizing system as a composite unity: it is a unity because it has a coherent organization, and it is composite because it consists of components whose relations with each other and with other systems constitute the organization that defines the system as such. The circularity of the reasoning foregrounds reflexivity while also transforming it. Whereas, in the Macy conferences reflexivity was associated with psychological complexity, in Maturana's world it is constituted through the interplay between a system and its components. They mutually define each other in the bootstrap operation characteristic of reflexive self-constitution” (462).

<sup>90</sup> I emphasize certain aspects of play as outlined by Gadamer, but deliberately do not include emphasis on the notion of playing games which leads rather quickly to the idea of professional sports as “play.” The justification for

[T]he movement of playing has no goal that brings it to an end; rather, it renews itself in constant repetition. The movement backward and forward is obviously so central to the definition of play that it makes no difference who or what performs this movement. (103)

The player is subsumed by the play, playing without purpose or effort, absorbed into the structure of play, and relaxed by it (104–05). Gadamer then moves to the child with a playful task, playing with a ball: “such tasks are playful ones because the purpose of the game is not really solving the task, but ordering and shaping the movement of the game itself” (107), which becomes the performance of a task. When the performance is before an audience it is a presentation—of the self. Performing the task presents it. “First and foremost play is self-presentation....All presentation is potentially a representation for someone” (108). Play before an audience becomes “the play” and “openness toward the spectator is part of the closedness of the play. The audience only completes what the play as such is.” (109). He continues,

This point shows the importance of defining play as a process that takes place “in between”...Play does not have its being in the player’s consciousness or attitude, but on the contrary play draws him into its dominion and fills him with its spirit. The player experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him...all the more the case where the game is itself “intended” as such a reality—for instance, the play which appears as presentation for an audience. (109)

For Gadamer, the “in between” is the creative space of being, of *self*-creating. The *poiesis* of performance is a confluence of forces in effect on that occasion and *mimesis* is (re-)enactment for the purpose of (re-)creating the past and oneself, drawing from the past and looking to the future. Each performative occasion is an opportunity to create, to reinterpret and to grow through

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not considering organized sport or professional sports “play” is that, as Gadamer says, play is without goals or purpose, and open to anyone. Professional sports, although based on the idea of playing games, do not fall in this category; rather, professional sport has commodified the idea of contest which is a part of some game-playing.

the experience. So too with teaching, filled with spirit, it is a live performance, and in the performance—with all of its interactions—knowledge is not so much given, as it is created.

Grace Ledbetter (2003), in explaining Socrates and his poetic (*poietic*) “method of interpretation,” says:

what audiences *earn* when they interpret divinely inspired poetry is not any share of divine knowledge, but rather improved human wisdom. Like the Delphic oracle’s pronouncement, poetry can have a divine source, but the wisdom that its Socratic interpretation can advance must be human wisdom. (118; emphasis added)<sup>91</sup>

What “audiences” engaged in the *poietic* performance *earn* “are new truths generated by the interpretation itself” (117; emphasis added). Analogously, in an educative *poietic* performance, knowledge is not given, but *self*-developed, *self*-created. *Knowledge*, as we think of it in the modern world, is not the *object* of the performance. Rather, the performance is an event for the development of *being* by doing—inquiry, study, listening, observing, reflecting—all directed at creating relations to oneself and to others as *paideia*. In archaic Greece, the focus is on the performing—the *doing*—of learning that leads to the creating of thought and *self*.

I make connection to Charles Sanders Peirce (1998) and Gregory Bateson (1979) and their revolutionary ideas concerning the interaction of *self*-in-relation and play.<sup>92</sup> Both conceive

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<sup>91</sup> H. D. Kitto, addresses this point of *poietic* performance is a slightly different way. Homer does not speak directly in his own voice. He paints (creates) a picture through the portrayal of characters; the audience must then do its own interpretive work (Kitto, 1966, 25).

<sup>92</sup> These two, disparate scholars, share certain characteristics: both were non-conforming, multi-disciplinary scientists, intellectually marginalized, regarded as odd by their colleagues; both, according to their biographies, were somewhat reclusive and anti-social. These two, similarly, paid strong attention to patterns, relations of things, and cosmological “order” in the development of thought. Peirce did not know A. N. Whitehead, but both Peirce and Bateson had much in common with him intellectually.

of *self* not as an object, but as a reference point, an inferred *self*. For both, growth related to development of creative thought and being, is associated with the play of thought.

For Peirce, the connection between discourse and thought is “as intimate as that between body and mind” (1998, 474). Thought is nothing until it is brought to action, to a change of *belief* (habit of thought), and into words. In speaking our truths, bringing them into “the public” (says Peirce), thought contributes to the growth of knowledge. In this way, we develop social networks. As others hear, and we hear others, the possibilities for further creativity increase. An idea becomes part of a set, then a family, etc. As others make observations — absolutely critical for Peirce— we see differently, imaging, visualizing, with a new perspective, an activity Peirce calls “Musement,” governed only by the “law of liberty,” making connections, free association, looking for differences and “homogeneities of connectedness...that every small part of space, however remote, is bounded by just such neighboring parts as every other, without a single exception throughout immensity” (438). For him, the inter-connectedness of all living things, which he says “abound in all immensity,” form a pattern of connection, one that suggests to me “patterns of self-similarity” of a *poietic* form of thought. Experiences, those that surprise us, draw us out of ourselves, allow us to create knowledge of *self* and in this way—as with Bateson—we are self-creating.

Working in a different tradition than Peirce, Bateson explores not the particular, atomistic activities of play, but rather asks, “how does play function in society?” When he asks the question in this way, he exemplifies the approach he recommends, that is, to see the particular in relation to the whole. He asks the question as he develops the idea of self from his multiple—

evolutionary, biological, communications, and systems theories—perspectives. For Bateson (1979), it is a mistake to try to understand any biological phenomenon as an object: self—really, there is no such “object” —cannot be isolated from a historical/cultural environment. Rather, one must view the organism as part of a functioning system. This view allows Bateson to develop a theory of creativity. Probing the notion of self he asks: Where does self begin and end? For Bateson, as for Peirce, *self* is a collection of impressions gathered, in part, through play, exploration or other such contexts for “double description” (*Mind and Nature*, 140–55). As Stephen Toulmin (1981) puts it,

no event or process has any single unambiguous description: we [need to] describe any event in different terms, and view it as an element in a different network of relations, depending on the standpoint from which—and the purpose for which—we are considering it.” (in Wilder-Mott, 1981, 363)

For Bateson, play—or exploration, or crime<sup>93</sup> (or other activities of the same logical type)—is an organization of activities through which organisms develop a concept of “self” within systems (self-in-relation, part-whole) that have boundaries, which may be conceived as flexible, and crossed depending on the circumstances of frame and context. Bateson says play is *self*-validating; that is, a characterological awareness or development. One accumulates characteristics that comprise a notion of self through interactions and relationships. The feedback

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<sup>93</sup> I think Bateson’s (1979) use of “crime” as an activity of the same logical type as exploration—i.e., as “self-validating”—relates to the example of the rat, searching for food (132, 150). It makes no difference whether the rat finds food or gets a shock. It is successful in finding out where food is located, i.e., in learning the context for food. As Bateson points out, it is the difference— “contrast between learning about the particular and learning about the general.” Crime is like the “dark side” of exploration; it is a category, or organization, of activities that lead to the “incorporation or marriage of ideas about the world with ideas about self” (*Mind and Nature*, 150). In the interaction between the organism and the environment there is positive and negative feedback—both of which lead to a sense of relationship (self + world). Crime is an activity that provides to the participant feedback in the form of characterological validation of “self.”

from the interaction provides information to the organism about the boundaries or limits—i.e. about the organization and flexibility of systems. Through play, in this sense, one develops *double description*, seeing from a different standpoint. Play leads to abstraction, a way to envision new boundaries, and to play with “the structures or rules [of communication] and thereby move forward to new rules, new philosophies” (Bateson, 1956, 216).<sup>94</sup> This is comparable to Peirce’s “Musement,” which is the play of thought.

These factors—the play of thought, appreciation of patterns, recognition of the interplay and interconnectedness of humans, in the cosmos and to the cosmos—justify my suggestion that pragmatist thought recuperates the *poietic* to rehabilitate rationalism. Peirce and Bateson, each in their own way, bring to reasoned thought the importance of experience, and thus contingency; engagement and the need for the play of thought in reflection; and a sense of wholeness comprised of inter-connected patterns.

In her work, Katherine Hayles (1994, 1999) suggests that organisms respond to their environment in ways determined by their internal self-organization. Hence, they are not only self-organizing, they are also *autopoietic*, or *self-making*. This is a post-humanist *self*, one that is constituted not as an autonomous, individual independent of the cosmos, as is the modern human; rather, the post-human *self* continually evolves, emerging from the *poietic* interaction among organism, word and environment, which is the bridge, I believe, between complexity theory and a postmodern theory of representation. What becomes critically important for

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<sup>94</sup> *Double description* or *binocular vision* is important to Bateson because it creates a sense of difference, which is generative; conversation, “talking about” is a discursive practice that leads to *binocular* vision, as opposed to the discursive practices that lead to monocular vision.

education then is to provide a rich environment and opportunity for playful engagement with ideas and interaction to promote creativity and growth.

## **PART 2 PROFFERED HYPOTHESES OF A PRAGMATIST INQUIRY**

In proffering the results of my pragmatist inquiry into the poetic, reconnecting with, and focusing on, the intent of this inquiry, I have traced the word “poetic” over time, to understand its meaning in use, related to thought and education. In this process of *discernment*, I have emphasized the relations between the poetic as a form of representation and a concept of *self* historically. In doing so, I found a postmodern shift in conceptions of *self* related to its modernist discursive position. I make connections between modernist discursive practices and Aristotle’s *Poetics*, where he redefines the powerful archaic Greek concept of *mimesis* as representation. Here lies, I believe, one root of the rationality so dominant in modernism. *Representation*, taught in schools, beginning as grammar, is not a neutral medium, but metaphorically, a *form of thought*, that operates culturally as “re-presentation,” that is, to reproduce a rationalist mode based on Aristotelian abstraction and generalization. Prior to Aristotle and his teacher, Plato, the poetic—still related to *mimesis*—describes a different episteme, a culture oriented around discursive speech practices that reflect values of *poiesis* (to create, to make, to do).

A *poietic mimesis* relates to “representation” as recollection and re-presenting with variation. “Representation” is fluid, not fixed, reflecting a cultural value of innovation and transformation, within a relational context. The mode of thought is interpretation; one interprets through recognition of patterns. *Knowledge* concerns relations, an awareness of being in the world. There are no *equivalencies* between this and that; there is, however, *adequation* in the

recognition of similarity in patterns. As with the aesthetic of Eco's openwork, the interpretation builds on the past and provides variation through interaction, with oneself and others.

With these two forms of *mimesis*, two very different perspectives related to the poetic, I am reminded of Heidegger, his poetic turn, and his inquiry into modes of thought while trying to understand what it means to educate.<sup>95</sup> For him, education, traced to the Greek concept of *paideia*, sees "each succeeding generation bring[ing] its own fund of experience to bear on interpreting such notions of fundamental import to the leading of a life" (in Peters, 2002, 30). Idealizing that goal, Heidegger states, the role of the university, the "pinnacle of our educational system," should not be utility and expediency, or conformity to convention and custom; certainly it should not be "an instrument of social engineering or, more generally, simply a *means* to an end" (30–31). He maintains, however, that education is reduced by rational reason— institutionalized in the university— "to the instrumental, by analogy with *techné*," and rational reason "is the source of everything awry with the university today." As he does so often and so well, Heidegger suggestively illustrates the relation between rationalism—referring to the subject-object split— and education etymologically:

In the Aristotelian use of the term *subjectum*, subject constitutes the very center of one's identity; *sub*-stantiality is essential, coterminous with and forever present unto the self...The original sense of Latin *subicere*, "to place beneath," was applied in the most basic of senses, as in placing a mare beneath a stallion, while *adicere* meant "to insert," "to hurl (oneself) on top of." In a curious reversal of fortune from inferior to superior position, the theoretical subject, now sovereign, seizes upon the object, thrown before the mind, to re-present it in the abstraction of thought. Likewise in the university, the pedagogical relation between teacher and student is understood in homologous terms as a practical instance of the more

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<sup>95</sup> He draws on that inquiry in explaining his views on education to the post World War II committee that questioned him in connection to his Nazism.

general relation of subject to object. The teacher gives *eidos*, form and finality, to the student as spiritual material presented for shaping and forming, in accordance with an abstract model. The Greek metaphors of formation that provide the basis for our concept of education bear out this connection. In the word *morphe*, there is still to be found the potter's *poietical* hand at work on malleable clay. The teacher stands as *typos*, the mold, from which students will emerge as exemplars. As a verb, *typto*, reminds us of the violence of education in subject-object terms, for it has the meaning "to beat" or "to pound," as when combating an adversary or, more to the point, pressing a coin. The student is to be beaten into an image, fashioned as if he were a drachma coin to be put into circulation. (34–35)

What Heidegger also presents here is the relationship of the one who teaches to the abstraction and generalization of "teacher," subjected, "thrown under" the category of "teacher." The teacher is a mold for the production of students (also subjected by this production process). This is what he refers to as the "reduction of education to the instrumental" (36). Pedagogy, since Aristotle, has been based on his rationalization of *nature* (*physis*), the *nature* to abstract and to generalize and to make "equivalencies"—this is that—in *mimesis*. Heidegger says, "I came to see that the idea of truth as adequation of exchange between two things, representation and what is represented, was itself but an instance of figurative disclosure that had become fixed in our imagination" (36). This notion of equivalence implies a general idea about value, a "common denominator by which the equality of the exchange is to be measured" (36). The assumed relationship between teaching and learning can be seen in Heidegger's comment of equality of exchange; the material taught will be "exchanged" with the student, who will give back, on examination, an equivalent "value." An economy of exchange, a "poetics" (*sans "poietics"*) based on the idea of *mimesis*, still sits behind—really, underneath, as foundational to—the idea of a modernist education.

In contrast, a *poietic mimesis* brings forward a self-creating and self-emerging nature. This sense of the poetic, which I call *poietic* to distinguish it, is less well recognized in curriculum studies. In the final chapter I will relate these two concepts of *mimesis* to the present moment, in the work of two fine scholars of curriculum studies, David Hansen and Tetsuo Aoki, as an indication of the influence of this split. In developing *hope*, the final moment of a pragmatist inquiry, I will focus on the discursive practice of Aoki, embodying the spirit of *poiesis* in education.

## CHAPTER 5 TOWARD A *POIESIS* OF CURRICULUM

In the following chapter I will make connections between (1) the intent of my inquiry to understand what Richard Rorty means by “poetic,” detailed in Chapter 2, and to suggest implications for the way one might (re)conceive curriculum.

### RORTY AND THE POETIC

What does Richard Rorty mean when he advocates for the poet rather than the metaphysician? When he refers to “poetic imagination” is he simply referring to figurative use of language? To answer these questions, in light of my inquiry, I refer to Rorty’s (1967) Introduction to *The Linguistic Turn*; there he states that “epistemological difficulties which have troubled philosophers since Plato and Aristotle” are related to what he calls, drawing on John Dewey, a “spectatorial account of knowledge.” The difficulties concern

the acquisition of knowledge [as] the presentation of something ‘immediately given’ to the mind, where the mind is conceived of as a sort of ‘immaterial eye,’ and where immediately means... ‘without the mediation of language.’ (39)

The “presentation of something immediately given” is its “representation” in language, a representation of knowledge so separated “from doing and making that we fail to recognize how it controls our conceptions of mind, of consciousness and of reflective inquiry” (Dewey, 1929, 22).<sup>96</sup> Dewey’s characterization of *spectatorial* knowledge closely resembles Timothy Reiss’s

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<sup>96</sup> John Dewey’s (1929) *Experience and Nature* contains, I think, six references to other scholars. Five of these are: Basil Gildersleeve, Gilbert Murray, Otto Jespersen, Alexander Goldenweiser, and Herbert Spencer. Gildersleeve was an exemplary scholar of Greek at Johns Hopkins. Gilbert Murray a scholar of Greek literature at Oxford (and later president of the League of Nations). Jespersen was a Danish linguist, inventor of the international language of Esperanto, and later, Ido; he lectured in the US and studied the American educational system. Goldenweiser, a graduate of Columbia University, studied anthropology with Frank Boaz; his interests were race, sex, cultural diffusion and psychoanalysis. Herbert Spencer was a social Darwinist, interested in the development of symbolic relations. Symbolic interactionism, one of four theoretical approaches to analysis in sociology, derived

(1982) “objectivity” in the rationalist discourse of modernity. Indeed, Dewey takes apart “objectivity” in his criticism of philosophy in the Introduction to (and throughout) *Experience and Nature* (1929).<sup>97</sup> For Dewey, the *spectatorial* theory of knowledge is problematic in three ways: first, the assumption of “knowledge” as a result of (only) observing; second, its denial of the other, bodily or organic ways of knowing; and third, refusal to acknowledge the choices of selection (viewer discretion) in the representation of knowledge. These problems stem from the “separation between theory and practice, knowledge and action” (24) which Dewey attributes to “the Greeks” (Plato and Aristotle).

“Spectatorial” knowledge is widely accepted in educational practices, implemented, as William Doll (1993) explains, in relation to a concept of curriculum

that sets out the *a priori* in clear and concise terms, and to a concept of instruction whereby the teacher (as knower) shows and transmits the *a priori* to the student. The teacher’s success (as well as the student’s) depends on the size of the deficit between the ideal reality “out there” and the existential reality that the student possesses. It is feasible to call this curriculum a “measured deficit curriculum,”

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from the influence of Herbert Spencer. An interactionist approach views communication by means of symbols as the key to social organization; humans act toward people, objects, and events on the basis of the meanings they impart to them. For Dewey those meanings are, in part, derived from culture and systems of relations in which the human is participant. Dewey’s pragmatist philosophy, an anti-positivist one, informs his views on the interactions among language, culture, and human activities; his historical study of the development of philosophy, and what preceded it, draws on the scholarly work of the six scholars mentioned.

<sup>97</sup> Philip Jackson (2002), in *John Dewey and the Philosopher’s Task*, undertakes an inquiry into the multiple revisions Dewey made to the Introduction to *Experience and Nature*. While he honestly admits his own hopes and desires for the inquiry in the Afterward, admitting that he arrives at no substantive conclusions, Jackson provides intriguing insights and discussion of differences among the versions.

In a personal conversation (2001), Jackson stated that he could not see that Dewey’s two years in China had any influence in the writing of the book, or in his thinking, written on his return from that trip. On my part, subsequent to my exploration of differences in interpretation of *mimesis*, before and after the rational Greeks (Plato and Aristotle), I find in this work references that I attribute directly to Dewey’s encounter with a culture so completely different from his own. For example, his acceptance of the existence of the mythical and magical alongside—integrally a part of—the “objective,” is not a “rational” view, nor a typical Euro-American one, but it was a part of the pre-revolutionary Chinese culture he visited.

with grades designed to measure the size of the deficit: the higher the grade the lower the deficit. (139)<sup>98</sup>

The *a priori* concept of teaching and learning that Doll describes as a “measured deficit curriculum” is based on two *mimetic fallacies*. The first is that representations in textbooks are equivalent to experience (*this is that*). The second fallacy is to assume that learning is the same in both situations, i.e. that the stripped-down, objective version of some universal reality is the same as life in all its untidy, disorderly complexity. The third fallacy, Doll describes elsewhere, pointing to the authority of the text which presents a God’s eye view, without acknowledging other perspectives or the “selective choices” (Dewey, 1929) made in the determination of the knowledge presented.

Continuing in *Experience and Nature*, in determination of what Rorty might mean by *poetic*, I focus on the contrast to a *spectatorial* view that Dewey presents. He refers to the spectatorial observation as the “blankest of stares”; the difference he develops, however, refers to more than a degree of involvement. Observation is supremely important to the pragmatist thought of Dewey (and Peirce). Observation *on observations* (12) is reflection that leads to intellectual growth. Observation on observation<sup>99</sup> has to do with the subject interacting with itself as the object. “In this sense,” says Dewey,

The recognition of “subject” as centres (sic) of experience... marks a great advance. It is equivalent to the emergence of agencies equipped with special powers of observation and experiment, and with emotions and desires that are efficacious for production of chosen modifications of nature. For otherwise the

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<sup>98</sup> Doll (1993) draws on Stephen Toulmin’s history of the “spectator” in ancient Greece and its relation to theoretical knowledge and philosophy, pg. 140.

<sup>99</sup> The sense of “observation on observations”—key to any reflection in depth—is akin to Gregory Bateson’s (1979) “pattern of patterns” (meta- patterns) with which he begins *Mind and Nature*.

agencies are submerged in nature and produce qualities of things which must be accepted and *submitted* to. (13)

Agency submerged in things which must be *submitted* to corresponds to the subjectivism that William Pinar (2005) describes as the “gracious submission” of some educators to the politicization of the reform of public education by special interest groups—“a national fantasy fabricated and articulated by politicians” (69; also Huebner, 1999, 231–40).<sup>100</sup>

When Dewey refers to “modifications of nature,” presaging Gregory Bateson, he refers also to mind, for mind is formed through the interaction of nature and culture.<sup>101</sup>

The mind that appears *in* individuals is not as such individual mind. The former is in itself a system of belief, recognitions, and ignorances, of acceptances and rejection, of expectancies and appraisals of meanings which have been instituted under the influence of custom and tradition. (219)

Dewey develops, by bridging the (artificial) separation of nature and experience (20–21), a theory of “emergent” mind (271), on which he bases the interaction and influence of subject and object to create “newness.” *Newness* is growth, transformation and learning involving *self* which is for Dewey, never “owned,” finished or closed (245). Growth requires:

Surrender of what is possessed, disowning of what supports one in secure ease...in all inquiry and discovery; the later implicate an individual still to make, with all the risks implied therein. For to arrive at new truth and vision is to alter. The old self is put off and the new self is only forming, and the form it finally takes will depend upon the unforeseeable result of an adventure. No one discovers a new world without forsaking an old one; and no one discovers a new world who exacts guarantee in advance for what it shall be, or who puts the act of discovery

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<sup>100</sup> In regard to this position of submission, Dewey refers to an individual who is “broken off, discrete, because it is at odds with its surrounding. It either surrenders, conforms, and for the sake of peace becomes a parasitical subordinate...(245).

<sup>101</sup> Jackson notes that Dewey’s later comment that were he to write his book again he would substitute the word “culture” for “experience.” Most of Dewey’s book titles are, for example, *Democracy and Education*, a combination of two contrasting words, joined by “and.” Experience and nature are two too-similar words.

under bonds with respect to what the new world shall do to him when it comes into vision. This is the truth in the exaggeration of subjectivism. Only by identification with *remaking the objects* that now obtain are we saved from complacent objectivism. (245; emphasis added).

The *remaking* of objects, as Dewey explains, and as Maxine Greene (1988) later explores, is the role of *imagination*:

Imagination as mere reverie is one thing, a natural and additive event, complete in itself, a terminal object rich and consoling, or trivial and silly, as may be. Imagination which terminates in a modification of the objective order, in the institution of a new object is other than a merely added occurrence. It involves a dissolution of old objects and a forming of new ones in a medium which, since it is beyond the old object and not yet in a new one, can properly be termed subjective. (220)

Through imagination the subject-object chasm is bridged; but it is *more*, too, because it leads to a re-*forming* of “old objects.” How does this relate to the poetic, for Dewey and hence, for Rorty? The remaking of objects through imagination relates strongly to the pre-Socratic idea of *poiesis* in my inquiry; but what does it mean, if anything, to Dewey? Art, as he explains, for the earliest “Greek thinkers” was born of experience—“of need, lack, deprivation, incompleteness” — that “inferior portion of nature...infected with chance and change, the less *Being* part of the cosmos” (355). Out of the struggle of human experience, attacked by the fates, comes imagination, visioning of a different sort; “the more unrestrained the play of fancy, the greater the contrast” (80) between labor and leisure, work and pleasure. A sense of *living* is generated in “those periods of relief when activity was dramatic”; *dramatic* here probably refers to “the kind of intense and gripping excitement, startling suddenness, or larger-than-life impressiveness associated with drama. First, imagination provides relief and release; “objects of imagination are consummatory in the degree in which they exuberantly escape from the pressure

of natural surrounding, even when they re-enact its crises” (81). But then also, “consummations have first to be hit upon spontaneously and accidentally...before they can be objects of foresight, invention and industry” (81). The “creation” which is the product of imagination may be asserted “vaguely and mystically” (360), however,

The “magic” of poetry—and pregnant experience as poetical quality—is precisely the revelation of meaning in the old effected by its presentation through the new. (360)

This is *poiesis* in the archaic sense of *to make, to create, to do*. To create, using imagination, is *Being*, in the fullest sense of *participating* in the cosmos—not simply spectating. As a result of this inquiry, I feel confident in suggesting that Rorty’s reference to poetic imagination draws heavily on concepts put forward in Dewey’s *Experience and Nature*. Here the poetic is associated with agency, imagination, creativity, all emerging from the interactions between and among, “organism” “word” and “environment.” A question that has concerned me since the beginning of the project concerns Rorty’s idea of “conversation.” He cites Michael Oakeshott’s (1959) essay, of course, in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, but the idea of conversation as “edifying” discourse, and the poetic seems to lie deeper in his thinking. What do poetic and conversation have to do with each other? Dewey makes a distinction between fine art and ordinary art. Fine art is an end in itself, as is “knowledge as the fruit of intellectual discourse”; but such an art is an art as yet open to comparatively few” (203). In contrast,

Letters, poetry, song, the drama, fiction, history, biography, engaging rites and ceremonies hallowed by time and rich with the sense of the countless multitudes that share in them, are also modes of discourse that...are ends for most persons.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Basil Gildersleeve, Greek scholar at Johns Hopkins until the age of 84, editor of the *Journal of Philology* until 89, also wrote poetry. Just before his death at the age of 90, he wrote this sonnet which expresses sentiment

From Dewey's perspective, the art forms he lists here are the arts of the people, who effectively communicate, through language and performance, their joys and experiences. Communication is consummatory (final, an "end," and "objective") as well as instrumental (a "means"). It is a *means* of shared experience, "the greatest of human goods." Communication is

uniquely instrumental and uniquely final. It is instrumental as liberating us from the otherwise overwhelming pressure of events and enabling us to live in a world of things that have meaning. It is final as a sharing in the objects and arts precious to a community, a sharing whereby meanings are enhanced, deepened and solidified in the sense of *communion*. (204–05; emphasis added)<sup>103</sup>

"Poetry" as an art (not a *fine art*) and "conversation" (as discourse, but not *intellectual* discourse) are both consummatory (ends) and instrumental (means), and both are subjective, ("private" [103], not objective) expressions that reach out to a community bridging private and public.

Further, for Dewey, an "objective" *self*, defined "within closed limits" inevitably faces the "dialectic [problem] of the universal and individual" (244). This strongly autonomous individual, finding security in clear-cut boundaries and demarcations, "hugs himself in his isolation and fights against disclosure, the give and take of communication...[and] the very integrity of existence" (242–43). A *permeable self* (242), on the other hand, one that has

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similar to the point Dewey makes: "I know this sonnet-writing is inanity./ It is not art. 'Tis nothing but a knack/ With which I while away the darksome hours./ I'll keep it up, though critics doubt my sanity/ Till the pale postman comes whose knocks attack/ Alike the poor men's cots and princes' towers." ([http://etc.princeton.edu/CampusWWW/Companion/gildersleeve\\_basil\\_lanneau.html](http://etc.princeton.edu/CampusWWW/Companion/gildersleeve_basil_lanneau.html)). For Dewey, poetry was not "fine art"; it was the art of "the poor" and "the princes." Art "yields direct enjoyment," and derives from festivity "in revery (sic), ceremonies, and conversation" (1958, 79).

<sup>103</sup> I speculate that by "communication" Dewey may refer to *conversation*, in Rorty's terms. In the OED, *conversation* is associated with "having dealings with others; living together; commerce, intercourse, society, intimacy. *Communion* is "fellowship; intimate personal converse; sharing or holding in common with others.

“qualitative and intrinsic boundaries” and “affinities and active outreachings for connection and intimate union,” is one that is open to growth and renewal (242–45).

No one discovers a new world without forsaking an old one; and no one discovers a new world who exacts guarantee in advance for what it shall be, or who puts the act of discovery under bonds with respect to what the new world shall do to him when it comes into vision. (246)<sup>104</sup>

For the permeable *self*, conversation/communication bridges subjectivity and objectivity, allowing the “old self [to be] put off and the new self [to] form” (245), a *poiesis*, in the reforming.<sup>105</sup>

In Dewey’s *Experience and Nature*, I find the basis for Rorty’s use of the *poetic* and *imagination*, and I understand better pragmatist thought and its relation to the linguistic turn in philosophy. In fact, much of the theoretical frame that Rorty brings forward and has developed over the last forty years is in this Dewey book. Having explored the poetic to create a wider panorama, seeing the poetic in relation to two modes of representation—*poiesis* and poetic—I now read Dewey differently. Dewey—and Nietzsche and Heidegger—did similar research, recognizing a particular habit of thought, the modernist habit of objectivism. As Timothy Reiss

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<sup>104</sup> Dennis Carlson (2004) in his *Leaving Safe Harbors*, alludes beautifully to this Deweyan point of forsaking an old world to discover a new one; one does not discover with the vision already in sight. The idea of being “clear,” but especially about the future, is not one often associated with Dewey. Indeed, as Philip Jackson (2002) notes, a criticism aimed at Dewey’s writing is that “it’s an unstructured world in which you sort of move through a fog” (Jackson, 98–99). Jackson makes much of this point; he says Dewey headed “straight into the fog”; he continues, “What we still want to know is what lay beyond the fog for Dewey” (101). For Dewey, however, as the quotation (above) indicates, one cannot predict the future until it comes into vision; *discovery* is of the unknown. As a good pragmatist, Dewey was content to be guided in practice by his “vision”—not of a clear path—but of recognizing and encouraging relationships.

<sup>105</sup> Dewey’s views on communication are criticized by feminist, poststructuralist, and critical theorist critiques concerning “power and subjectivity” in relations. A major thrust of Dewey’s pragmatist view is, however, that *rationalism* and positivist philosophies of modernity condition the habits of thought (and practices) which form these subjectivities. Attending closely to practices of communication, one recognizes the obfuscated presence of modernist habits. Elizabeth Ellsworth (1997), in *Teaching Positions*, brilliantly exposes the power dynamics in dialogical communication in her discussion of modes of address.

(1982) points out, modernist thought is characterized, in part, by a cognitive separation of subject and object, focusing on the object, seeing it external to the enunciating subject, and representing, in language, that object as though the subject is both unaffected by the object, and indeed, absent. This modernist habit tends to reinforce itself, and Rorty says that to be able to move beyond modernity, to envision a new future, one needs poetic imagination. Modernist habits are hard to dismiss, actually, hard to recognize. The poetic is slippery and hard to get hold of. In the following section, I draw on the work of two curriculum scholars to illustrate, in their discursive practices, selected differences between (1) a continuing, but obfuscated, presence of Aristotelian *mimesis* in David Hansen's (2004) "A Poetics of Teaching"; and (2) a less recognized *poietic* presence in Tetsuo Aoki's (2004) scholarly playing with curriculum.

### **THE POETIC IN CURRICULUM STUDIES**

In his article "A Poetics of Teaching," David Hansen (2004), comments that no comprehensive study of the poetic has been done in curriculum studies; he provides such, drawing from a wide selection of authors: Aristotle, Friedrich Schiller, John Dewey, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Martin Heidegger, and Friedrich Nietzsche. From these works he pulls forward various aspects of his sense of the poetic to create a "holistic" impression of teaching as a process that "can rekindle, or reignite, a love of learning, of development, of new insight and knowledge, that might otherwise never have come into being" (137). Hansen's worry, one shared by many educators, is that teaching is today looked upon "as merely an engineering problem of how to transfer a preset body of knowledge and skills efficiently to students." In this frame, the "teacher becomes a paid functionary...while the student becomes the

passive recipient” (123). Hansen’s remedy for this situation is to focus—as the title of the article states—on teaching and the teacher’s art. In this Hansen does not neglect the student—believing the student will benefit from a “dynamics of teaching”—but his focus is on a new approach to teaching, a poetic approach. As I have said, and I believe Hansen would agree, poetics is a “slippery term.” Hansen describes many meanings for the term, but argues that all of them coalesce around a “heightened sense of meaning, artfulness, and delight that various events, scenes, and situations can spontaneously evoke” (122). He encourages teachers to look upon their acts in this poetic way, fusing together “aesthetic, moral, and intellectual” aspects of their work. To look upon teaching in this way, Hansen argues, heightens the “relation between world and person” as “reason and emotion [or inquiry and art] act in concert” (122). This vision draws heavily, not exclusively, on Aristotle and his poetics. For his vision (appealingly romantic and ideal), Hansen draws on the power of metaphor, referring to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s (1980) seminal work (*Metaphors We Live By*). Hansen believes that metaphor “unites reason and imagination” (125); “that languages of inquiry and of understanding are *enriched*...by the ubiquitous place of metaphor in them” (126). In short, metaphors constitute “a mode of understanding” (127), an understanding that opens us up to the aesthetic, moral and intellectual conditions of the world we inhabit. Hansen asks teachers to look at the world in a poetic manner and to act upon this vision in their teaching.

In his essay, Hansen holds out an impressionistic image of an experienced ideal teacher. His model is a representational image of what a teacher (or *Teacher*) could be. As he says, speaking directly to the nation’s teachers, “Here is a portrait of what teaching can mean, of how

it can fuse the aesthetic, the moral, and the intellectual features of your work into a worthy undertaking” (141–42).

I applaud Hansen in his efforts, the intent of the article, and the sentiment expressed. But as Richard Rorty says, to move beyond modernity, to move beyond modern discursive practices *that hold us captive* in hierarchal thinking, we need *imagination* to envision a new future. Timothy Reiss (in Chapter 2) describes, somewhat obscurely, the evolution and characteristics of modernist discourse practices which hold us captive: (1) objectivity, the separation of the viewing subject from the object being viewed; (2) the introduction of thought ordered by a metaphor, in the case of science, a telescopic image; (3) perspective, the view from above, or from “everywhere”, the all-seeing; (4) a drive to certainty; and (5) the linear narration of causation. In its modernist (*non-poietic*) sense, the poetic is traced to Aristotle’s treatment of *mimesis*, a rational process of abstraction and generalization of thought, likening this to that, and reasoning as though *this is that* (Chapter 3). In agreement with Rorty, recognizing a postmodern tendency to proliferate endlessly the types of criticism of modernity and the dominant discourse of rationalism, I want to understand *how* to “move beyond.” What form of representation might follow modernity? Practically speaking, that work has already been done by Charles Sanders Peirce and John Dewey. Pragmatist thought intended to address the inadequacies and errors that they attributed to positivist philosophies, the effect of which was apparent in modern discursive practices. My argument is that we too rarely understand the ways in which we continue to *be* modern, but those ways are present in our discourse. I use David Hansen’s essay to illustrate the insidious persistence of such modernist discursive practices —despite our best intentions. I

suggest that underneath its romantic idealism, his poetics of teaching is a continuation of Aristotelian *mimesis* in representation.

I find three points to bring forward from Hansen's essay indicating an Aristotelian poetic of *mimesis*. I begin with the association of the poetic with metaphor. As a figure of speech, a metaphor "associates two unlike things; the representation of one thing by another."<sup>106</sup> An image is used to represent or "figure" something else. As Reiss points out, modernist rational thought is *ordered* by metaphor. Metaphorical order leads one to look from the particular to the abstraction; the abstraction is an image or concept which is a universal. In Aristotelian terms, the universal is a representation of traits of nature in all humans. Thus, rational thought moves logically from the particular to the representation of the universal, and reasoning occurs at the *level* of generalization. The particular is subjected—subordinate— to the universal.

Dewey (1958) criticized this mode of thought as "spectatorial"; it calls us to look at the image. The image is, however, not a real thing, but "non-temporal," (an *eternal*), "out of time in the sense that a particular temporal quality is irrelevant to [it]." "These non-temporal, mathematical or logical qualities are capable of abstraction, and of conversion into relations, into temporal, numerical and spatial *order*. As such they are dialectical, non-existential" (148; original emphasis). Dewey continues, elaborating the types of knowledge obtained by modern epistemologies, which are "bound to regard things which are causally explanatory as superior to results and outcomes; for the temporal dependence of the latter cannot be disguised, while 'causes' can be plausibly converted into independent beings, or laws, or other non-temporal

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<sup>106</sup> Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms (1997), s. v. "Metaphor."

forms” (149). I take Dewey’s point to be that “eternals” (non-temporals) create a hierarchical ordering of thought. The particular is subjected to the abstract image or concept. These *eternals* are manipulated rationally—at a distance—to create logical solutions, to find causes, to lead to certain knowledge.

With these Deweyan thoughts in mind, I reconsider Hansen’s phrase about the poetic as a dynamic that can inspire and lead us to new ways of seeing the “relation between world and person” (122). In this statement, I recognize “organism” (person) and “environment” (world); but notice that the “word” (representation) is absent—a characteristic of modern discourse practices, where “word” (representation) is assumed, mistakenly thought to be equivalent (in *mimesis*) to the object represented. The absence of “word” is essential to understanding the obfuscated presence of Aristotelian *mimesis* in Hansen’s use of the word “poetic.” The portrait, the image, set before the teacher, suggests that *this* is a Teacher. It is a model, an abstract representation, to which the teacher is subjected. The word “subjected” here has great importance, because the subject is now really becoming an object, a thing. The teacher is now objectified as “Teacher.” This is a point that much distressed Dewey.

Beholding the vision, inspired by it, working toward the idealized “teacher” becomes, in the Aristotelian sense, the artistry of teaching. Here, artistry is conceived, in the classical manner, as the refinement of skills that leads eventually to connoisseurship (Tatarkiewicz, 1970; Eisner, 1979).<sup>107</sup> The product that this *mimetic* “artistry” aims toward is a more skilled teacher,

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<sup>107</sup> Eisner’s notion of connoisseurship is “spectatorial” (Dewey’s term) in the sense that it emphasizes knowing through seeing; however, he states: “My emphasis on seeing should be regarded as a shorthand way of referring to all of the senses and the qualities to which they are sensitive” (in Pinar et al., 1995, 582).

one who is able to control, him- herself and others, and to be responsible for a better learning situation. I recall the adjectives “captivating and mesmerizing” from Martin Jay’s (1998) chapter on *mimesis*, in regard to the rhythm in the back and forth of *mimesis*; I envision the teacher gazing first at the portrait, and then to him- herself, and back again, repeatedly. For the teacher, the idea of controlling a situation through cause and effect thinking (if I can be a better teacher I can get the students to learn more), no matter how poetic, is *self*-defeating. Hansen’s poetics provides an example of the dynamics of “gracious submission” (Pinar, 2004, 46) that leads to the subjectivization of teachers.

Embedded in the Aristotelian poetic dynamic of equivalency, *this is that*, is Martin Heidegger’s concern about an economy of exchange, where teacher “input” is equated with student “output,” as in test scores. Since neither particular teachers nor particular students are ever equal to the image, there is always a gap. Disguised is the direct relationship implied by cause and effect thinking, that if the teacher just improves his or her skills, the student will learn better. This places the teacher’s actions always within a deficit relationship; Hansen tacitly admits such when he presents his model of an idealized, abstracted, generalized teacher.

The poetic dynamic that is at work here also leads to the objectification of the student; Hansen states:

A teacher moved by gesture and voice, and drawn to the grace and the good often expressed in them, *gains access to the functioning of the mind* that all such acts reveal. (135; emphasis added)

Here Hansen is expressing, I feel certain, the common notion that in knowing the student better, the teacher can teach better. (Literally, gaining access to the actual functioning of a

student's *mind* is, I expect, not a reading Hansen intends). While Dewey, as I, might well applaud the existent quality of grace and good, there is still the idea, implied if not expressed, that teacher and student are separate, gazing at each other, seeing each other's gestures. The exchange of looks is only a sign however: "Gestures...are not primarily expressive and communicative"; "The story of language is the story of the use made of these occurrences; a use that is eventual, as well as eventful" (175). What either the teacher or the student sees in the exchange is a "signaling act" (177). Hansen states, "the teacher seeks to build upon [the signals]...urging students to deepen and extend their insights" (135); but the teacher's exhortations indicate, unfortunately, a blindness to the function of "word" in representation. It is not words that carry meaning, Dewey (1958) explains. A signal is primal "organic behavior," it has implications, and can lead to language. Important as this early awareness (of signals) is, it must not be confused with the use of language, which is more than merely a means of "economizing energy in the interaction" of individuals; language accrues meaning as the "consequences that flow from the distinctive patterns of human association" (175). Relationship is established in this patterning that arises from *participation*.<sup>108</sup> Participation, active engagement, so important to Dewey, is lacking in Aristotelian *mimesis* (as I have been indicating for several chapters), missing in modernist either/or thought, and unfortunately not evident in Hansens's teacher gaining access to the student's thoughts, actions, behaviors.

Participation, teacher and student together, begins movement toward a participatory act of shared *partnership*, "in which the activity of each is modified and regulated by the

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<sup>108</sup> The discourse of patterning is the name that Reiss gives to the discourse of mythopoetic cultures, a discourse that was effectively lost in the domination of rationalism.

partnership” (179). Entering into this communicative relationship, each of these formerly objectified persons, comes to share with the other. They are in communion. For Dewey, communication ends the objectification of both teacher and student, each becoming permeable to the other, entering a partnership born of shared activity. Explaining the difference between mere language use and communication, he says,

The heart of language is not “expression” of something antecedent, much less expression of antecedent thought. It is communication; the establishment of cooperation in an activity in which there are partners, and in which the activity of each is modified and regulated by the partnership. To fail to understand is to fail to come into agreement in action; to misunderstand is to set up action at cross-purposes. (179)

The consummatory act of communication for Dewey is about creating meaning, about which he states,

It constitutes the intelligibility of acts and things. Possession of the capacity to engage in such activity is intelligence. Intelligence and meaning are natural consequences of the peculiar form which interaction sometimes assumes in the case of human beings. (180).

The peculiar form of interaction Dewey refers to is, I suggest, what Rorty calls *conversation*. In this act of communication, uncommon in schools, meaning is made and communities develop, as well as permeable, non-objectified, *selves*.

My final point concerning a poetics of teaching as an aesthetic, moral, intellectual art concerns a conceptual difference between Aristotelian “fine art” as a representation of *nature* (a universal), and Dewey’s poetic art which coincides with my version of *poietic mimesis*. Teaching as an art conceived through Aristotelian poetics will always be a labor; this is a fundamental shift

away from Dewey's emphasis on the poetic and art as a pleasure and a qualitative expression of *release* from the toils of labor. Dewey notes,

A passion of anger, a dream, relaxation of the limbs after effort, swapping of jokes, horse-playing, beating of drums, blowing of tin whistles, explosion of firecrackers and walking on stilts, have the same quality of immediate and absorbing finality that is possessed by things and acts dignified by the title of esthetic. For man is more preoccupied with enhancing life than with bare living; so that a sense of living when it attends labor and utility is borrowed not intrinsic, having been generated in those periods of relief when activity was dramatic. (80)

*Dramatic*, in this sense, refers to intense, gripping excitement and surprise. According to Dewey, it is not laboring at one's craft that leads to consummatory experiences: "labor manifests things in their connections of things with one another, in efficiency, productivity, furthering, hindering, generating, destroying" (84). "Direct appreciative enjoyment exhibits things in the consummatory phase" (84), such as drama, poetry, art, celebration. *Imagination* is consummatory, in the degree to which it provides exuberant "escape from the pressure of natural surroundings" (81). And it is imagination that leads to growth.

Traditional teaching is founded on poetic practices which conceive of learning as some form of *mimesis*, either direct imitation and copying, or aimed at abstraction and generalization, the metaphorical *this is that*. The reform that Dewey brought to education subsequent to a reconsideration of the poetic, much as I have done here, is to see the necessity—and the liberty—of imagination in intelligent thought. In the following section I use the writing of Tetsuo Aoki to illustrate discursive practices that I think demonstrate a "*poiesis* of curriculum." Using this phrase, as I have done in the title of this dissertation, my aim is to call attention to the possibilities of generative creativity in reconceiving discursive practices. To create, to make, to

do—these were, for Dewey, the ultimate experiences of learners. The free and liberating experiences Dewey had in mind were not poetry and art classes where students copied the methods of others; nor were these opportunities to learn how to judge fine art. In drawing on the discursive practices of Aoki, I hope to bring forward an awareness of the type of creating/generativity that Dewey had in mind for curriculum.

### **TED AOKI AND A *POIESIS* OF CURRICULUM**

Tetsuo Aoki (2005) provides a contrasting sense of the poetic in curriculum studies, one that works to counter the hegemony of Eurocentric Western thought in education. Therefore, as one might expect at this point in this dissertation, Aoki's discursive practices provide an illustration of his conscious effort to decenter representation and, I suggest, Aristotelian *mimesis*. His interest in curriculum studies and in teaching, lies in his exploration of the *being* of teaching, its "is-ness" (191).

In his writing (and performance of teaching), calling attention to representation (word), his sense of being in the world (organism), and Western cultural values (environment), Aoki creates, by calling into play, the unseen, unrepresented, and lived phenomena of being-in-the-world when freed from a taken-for-granted, Eurocentric orientation. In Aoki's work, I focus, as I think he does, on the centrality of the *relationship* of organism/ word/environment in educational inquiry.

In this final section of the dissertation, I draw on Aoki's texts to illustrate a *poiesis* of curriculum emerging when one moves away from the tradition; that is, Aoki plays with the dominant discourse, creating "cracks," to access spaces rich with generative possibilities. His

discursive practice is an “evocation,” meaning “a re-creation of something not present, especially an event or feeling from the [lived] past.”<sup>109</sup> In these “breaks,” he calls others into engagement through surprise and wonder. Teaching is an opportunity to create—a *poiesis*—twining into the curriculum, perhaps even foregrounding, one’s lived experience.

### **Environment**

As “environment” relates to culture, Canadian-born, Japanese-Canadian, Aoki experienced the marginalization of racism around WWII. He has the sensibilities of his parents Japanese-ness, the language, the appearance, but is not at home in Japan. Aoki plays off Eastern culture against a dominant Western culture, creating a “tensionality” that he has felt much of his life, thereby decentering characteristics of Western knowledge such as rationality with its emphasis on vision (seeing).

### **Word**

As “word” relates to representation and to thought, Aoki beautifully works in a different frame, calling the Western canon into question. He says that “by questioning...by contrasting one thing with another, the resultant dialectic allows possibilities of a deeper awareness of who one is and of a fuller understanding of the conditions shaping one’s being” (2005, 35). Here I refer to one particular essay, “Language, Culture and Curriculum...”;<sup>110</sup> it is representative of his later essays, I believe, and it illustrates his mode of analysis. The essay deals directly with the relationship of language to culture and curriculum, exposing the oppressive, but opaque, effects

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<sup>109</sup> *Encarta World English Dictionary*, Microsoft Word X, 1999, s.v. “Evocation.”

<sup>110</sup> This chapter was a presentation to the Canadian Association of Curriculum Studies, President’s Symposium, with a colleague from the University of Alberta, Ken Jacknicke, May, 2000.

of language. The essay is a performance of insights gained through questioning from a position of marginality, a demonstration of consummate skill with language, awareness of (two) cultures and a belief in the importance of the meaningfulness of curriculum. His exploration illuminates how others might also find deeper awareness of “the conditions shaping one’s being.”

Aoki identifies his style (I would say discursive practice) as “metonymic writing.” Metonymy is the “substitution of an attribute for the name of the [objectified] *thing* meant.”<sup>111</sup> As such *metonymy* is a *trope*, a figure of speech, in which one thing is represented by another that is commonly and often physically associated with it.”<sup>112</sup> For example, “to refer to a writer’s handwriting as his or her “hand” is to use a metonymic figure.” Deconstructivists insist that undue privilege is “granted to metaphor in the metaphor/metonymy distinction or ‘opposition,’” and suggest, instead, “that all metaphors are really metonyms” (214).

Aoki’s metonymic writing uses the word/idea “fragment” to explore the physical relationship of the part to a more complex whole; the fragment does not in itself represent the whole, nor is it necessarily considered a self-similar element. To “fragment” is “to cause something to lose sense of unity or cohesion, with the result that it splits into isolated and often conflicting elements.”<sup>113</sup> A fragment is sometimes caused by a “break”; fragmenting leaves small gaps or chinks, “cracks.” Focusing on the fragment (the particular) is an inversion of the abstraction (universalization) of rationalism; in so doing, Aoki calls to question the coherence valued in rationalist discourse.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *Modern English Usage*, H. G. Fowler, s.v. “Technical Terms,” “metonymy”.

<sup>112</sup> *Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, s.v. “Metonymy”

<sup>113</sup> *Encarta World English Dictionary*, Microsoft Word X, 1999, s.v. “Fragment.”

<sup>114</sup> Coherence in rationalist discourse is achieved, in part, through the “absent presence” of metaphor—*this is that*— and through the linear narration of causation.

Aoki calls attention to the obfuscated role of metaphor (*this is that*) by creating what he calls the “conjunctive space” between, *this* and *that*, substituting “and” for the copula “is,” which is a variation to the verb “to be.” In so doing, Aoki suggests that there are other ways “to be.” Since there is now no direct relationship (*this/that*) that precludes variations and interpretations, there is a “space” to consider other possibilities, including those of lived experience. Between representational and non-representational discourses “is the *site* of living pedagogy” (429); for Aoki, this *site* is a creative space for his metonymic writing, it becomes a geographical terrain in some of his writing, and he explores its topography.<sup>115</sup> He refers to the “space” metonymically, as a “moment,” perhaps, the momentary fragment of lived life. In this essay (“Language, Culture, and Curriculum...”) he includes five *moments* in which to consider lived experience: “*Midst* Curriculum-as-Plan/Curriculum-as-Lived; “*Midst* Presence/Absence; “Opening Up to the Third Space *Midst* Representational/ Nonrepresentational Discourses”; “*Midst* Western Knowledge/Aboriginal Knowledge”; and “Translation/ Transformation.”<sup>116</sup>

In the conjunctive “and” space that is “opened up,” spaces that he calls “cracks,” where light comes in, he wonders what it may be like to be “enlightened,” “living in the spaces between, marked by cracks in the words” (2005, 54, 321). This is Aoki’s invitation to the

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<sup>115</sup> Aoki develops this notion of “space” drawing on cultural theorist, Homi Bhabha’s “third space of ambivalent construction,” similarly developed by: Trinh Minh-ha (hybridity); William Doll (“chaos in which dwell transformative possibilities”); Gloria Anzaldúa (*Borderlands/la Frontera*); and most notably, and complexly, by Deleuze and Guattari (nomadic spaces and rhizomatic connections/accesses). I speculate that this literary “space”—described now by many in various ways—is in some way comparable to the ineffable space of possibility that figured the work of both C. S. Peirce and Gregory Bateson, who came not from a literary frame, but from a mathematical and logical one: the logic of relatives, “the relation of the one and the many.” Michel Serres’s (1997) third space of knowing and Gregory Bateson’s levels of learning have close similarities.

<sup>116</sup> Antoinette Oberg (2005), a former student of Ted Aoki, notes that for him, *midst* is *being* in the middle; like the word “interest,” which derives, literally, from “inter” (between) and “esse” (Latin form of the verb “to be”). In the OED, to *interest* is to invest in, “share in” a spiritual privilege, “to engage in” (OED, s.v. “Interest,” v.)

audience. The hook he uses is absurdly simple: he pays intensely close attention to language, to words, and what they may—or may not—signify. He comments on the title, “Language, Culture, and Curriculum...(referring to himself and his co-presenter)

We are drawn into spaces: first, the space between “language” and “culture” where a graphic mark we call “comma” urges us to pause a moment, the space between “culture” and “curriculum” where we locate the word “and” claiming a conjoining, and then the space marked “...” suggesting “more to come” and “incompleteness.” (321)

Aoki proceeds from these deceptively easy observations, to create “cracks” in the three words which become the metonymic moments; for example, *curriculum*, becomes “curric/ulum...,” then “curriculum-as-plan/curriculum-as-lived” (322). The distinction he creates refers to the “plan” which is the “conventionalized,” “mandated,” “prescribed for implementation” curriculum which contrasts with “lived,” the “unplanned and unplannable,” a “site of both difficulty and ambiguity and also a site of generative possibilities and hope” (322). Aoki notes that “thoughtful teachers” remark that “pedagogy is located in the vibrant space in the *fold* between” “plan” and “lived.”<sup>117</sup> “Pedagogy” is one of his favorite words; he draws upon its etymological roots, to find that a pedagogue is one who leads, with care, by both listening and following; “what authorizes him [her] to be a leader is not so much the title or position, but rather his attunement to the care that silently dwells” (192). Aoki explains that he offers “short narratives— stories—that point to more than they tell,” fragmentary tales, that help us to “break

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<sup>117</sup> It would be interesting to compare Aoki’s use of “fold,” a common term for him, with Michel Serres’s use of the term, from a chaos theory perspective. For Serres, see *Troubadour of Knowledge* (“Folds and Knots”), and *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time* (“Method”). For “folding” in chaos theory (Baker transformations), see Edward Lorenz, *The Essence of Chaos*. Serres is a self-proclaimed “chaotician” (in *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time: Michel Serres with Bruno Latour*).

away from the orientation that may blind us” (190). His effort is to disrupt. The “break” signifies a “fragment” which fits with W. J. T. Mitchell’s (1994) reconceiving of representation as

a multi-dimensional and heterogenous terrain, a collage or patchwork quilt assembled over time out of fragments. Suppose further that this quilt was torn, folded, wrinkled, covered with accidental stains, traces of bodies it has enfolded. This model might help us understand a number of things about representation. I would make materially visible the structure of representation as a trace of temporality and exchange, the fragments as mementos, as “presents” re-presented in the ongoing process of assemblage, of stitching in and tearing out. (419)

In his metonymic moments, Aoki offers the reader/listener a gift, a “present” of representation comprised of his attunement, his sensitivity to the “difficulty and ambiguity” that he knows exists in the space that we are numb to; indeed, the space that Aristotle excluded in his either/or logic.

In the end, there is a short “lingering” moment, to note the transformation that the play of language has wrought: In re-working the title of the presentation, he changes the relationship of three separate “master signifier” words, “Language, Culture, and Curriculum...” separated by commas and spaces, to indicate their connections and relationship to the “living moments of life.” He says, “We leave you with a new title: “The Interplay of Languages and Cultures Midst Curricular Spaces: Five Metonymic Moments” (328). Where the previous title was three separated and singular nouns and an ellipsis, now the title is transformed, ironically, to a sentence fragment, but a fragment that even so, implies their interrelatedness.

## **Organism**

The disruption of Western representational discourse leads inevitably to a questioning of the idea/l of an individual, autonomous “*self* unto itself with its own *identity*” (page; emphasis

added). For Aoki, a unified sense of self is alien; for the Japanese a person is twofold of self and other” (327). In traditional Japanese language, there is not even a graphic for individualism. As a “Japanese-Canadian” he identifies with hybridity, and in its *being*, he “sinks into the lived space of between—in the midst of many cultures, into the *inter* of interculturalism,” reminding us that we all live in this space. He continues,

Indwelling here is a dwelling in the midst of difference, often trying and difficult. It is a place alive with tension. In dwelling here, the quest is not so much to rid ourselves of tension, for to be tensionless is to be dead like a limp violin string, but more so to seek appropriately tuned tension, such that the sound of the tensioned string resounds well. (382)

We all dwell amidst difference in this hybrid interspace. The idea of identity is limiting for Aoki, and for Heidegger, on whom he draws:

The traditional notion of “identity” tends to truncate the situational context of our lives, leaving the possible danger of reducing our life reality to an abstracted totality of its own, pretending to wholeness...such a reduction seduces us to forgetfulness of the possibilities for a fuller life, of our living in differences. He advises us not to limit ourselves, not to submit ourselves to mere identity, but to enlarge and deepen our place of dwelling so that both identity and difference can dwell complementarily. There, he says, would be a human place of openness wherein humans may struggle in their dwelling aright. And it is the quality of this struggle that really matters. (354)

As Aoki refers to “a human place of openness” and a capacity to dwell with the tensions of identity and difference, I find lessons worth living. As this war-torn time demonstrates, tensionalities are disproportionate in relation to the dominance of “modernist,” “rationalist,” “Western” representation, and its failure to recognize the generative value of difference. Aoki’s approach to teaching, like that of archaic Greeks pedagogues, “leads” through listening and

attunement, to help identify “cracks” through which the light might penetrate. In this regard, I recall again John Dewey’s (1958) remarks:

The visible is set in the invisible; and in the end what is unseen decides what happens in the seen; the tangible rests precariously upon the untouched and ungrasped. (43–44)

Aoki’s pedagogical attunement to the untouched and ungrasped is full of the more-ness he brings to teaching, the more-ness that he knows exists in all lived experience, the more-ness that leads to generative creativity. His performative pedagogy, that dwells in the folds between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived, opens to students the opportunity “to create, to make, to do”—to create meanings of lived experiences, to understand the culture around them, to make sense of the human struggle of being self-and-other, leads toward a *poiesis* of curriculum.

## REFLECTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this dissertation, I have criticized a rationalist discursive practice, a habit of thought, which has dominated intellectual and educational discourse for centuries. As a conceptualizing practice it is one that excludes the role and/or influence of the observer. In its *form*, this practice aims to reason equivalencies, *this is that* (mimesis). Reasoning that proceeds from a mimetic form of logic is *dyadic* (Peirce, in Eisele, 1985, 843), which is defined as “pertaining to or designating a relation between exactly two entities” (OED). The *forms* are universals or categories; the formal relations between the *forms* is one of equivalency.<sup>118</sup> Peirce called this type of reasoning *corollarial*, because it is a form of reasoning, based on Euclidean geometrical forms, that given a particular set of circumstances proceeds to certain conclusions; it also entails

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<sup>118</sup> A syllogism is an example of simple logical relations. Peirce complicates logical relations by introducing a *triadic* logic of relations (see below).

the obvious corollary *this* is not *that*. Dyadic reasoning is a simple, logical form fit for a world observed as whole, complete, fixed and certain, one that creates a bifurcated either/or world of knowledge.<sup>119</sup> In this static view, the regularities of the world can lead to immutable laws and knowledge as fact. Practices of schooling derived from this form are also simple, based upon the assumption that memorizing facts and reasoning from them is educative.<sup>120</sup>

An alternative to such rationalist logic is the pragmatist one developed by Charles Sanders Peirce, advanced and explicated by John Dewey. Pragmatist thought acknowledges the contribution of Euclidean forms of deductive reasoning, views it as a necessary but simple form of reasoning. However, in their world, just then being recognized as evolving, open-ended, and expanding, a new form of logic was necessary, a logic that assumed transformation, change, and process as fundamental to existence. Moving beyond modernity and its form of reasoning, pragmatist logic is *triadic* involving relations (interactions) between and among the three categories that I label organism/ word/ environment. *Triadic* reasoning involves a set of formal relations that Peirce calls the “logic of relations” (and variously, logic of relatives), where

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<sup>119</sup> Often one recognizes the attempt to reconcile bifurcations, as in the case of “reason and imagination,” or “reason and art” (Hansen, 122); however, John Dewey advocates moving beyond bifurcated “either-or” ways of thinking altogether. He does not intend, as some have suggested, reconciliation of the bifurcation by adding *this* (reason) plus *this* (imagination) to get *that* (artfulness), which is basically the same logical form. Dewey’s approach as a pragmatist is to use an alternative *form* of logic, a logic of relations, one that sees thought as a process of reasoning within a situation, beginning with the interaction of the organism and its environment.

<sup>120</sup> Peirce provides an example of the formal logic that underlies traditional pedagogical practices where learning is conceived as a direct result of teaching. To “teach” in this frame is to show or demonstrate, derived from rhetorical discursive practices. To “learn” is related etymologically to “lore”; the teacher gives the lesson—“lore” is a body of knowledge— to the student who learns by receiving it. The simple logical relations of schooling, the relations between teaching and learning, are *dyadic*. The relation is perceived as a direct one between the teacher and the learner. The mediating role of the “lore” itself, its evolution over time, relations to both teacher and learner are unconsidered. As I discussed in Chapter 2, drawing on Timothy Reiss’s (1982) analysis, rationalist conceptualizing practices overlook the *discourse* itself, which in Peirce’s example, is the lore. As Peirce explains, the art of teaching is a branch of rhetoric; learning is a fruit of logic. These two practices, teaching and learning, are brought together as the student learns reasoning for himself—what to think—not *how* to think.

reasoning proceeds from categories that are at best “approximal” and transforming. In its triadic form, reasoning begins with the observer (organism), whose view is always only partial, who exists in an environment that is always evolving.<sup>121</sup>

The influence of the observer greatly complicates the formal relations of reasoning, because the effect of unique individual *experience* (interaction with environment) is brought into logical relations. Peirce’s logic of relations is greater in difference than merely a move away from “purely mathematical” reasoning.<sup>122</sup> About this Peirce admits,

It is my fate to be supposed an extreme partisan of formal logic, and so I began. But the study of the logic of relations has converted me from that error. Formal logic centers its whole attention on the least important part of reasoning, a part so mechanical that it may be performed by a machine, and fancies that that is all there is in the mental process. For my part, I hold that reasoning is the observation of relations, mainly by means of diagrams and the like. It is a living process... Reasoning is a kind of experimentation, in which, instead of relying on the intelligible laws of outward nature to bring out the result, we depend upon the equally hidden laws of inward association. (Peirce, in Ketner, 2000, 45)

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<sup>121</sup> Peirce developed his triadic form of reasoning and the logic of relations at the roughly the same time Henri Poincaré became aware that Newton’s dyadic equations would not work on the relations among three celestial bodies. Poincaré’s mathematical struggles led eventually to the birth of chaos and complexity theories. Peirce disagreed with Poincaré’s insistence upon the “nonexistence of any absolute truth for *all* questions” (Peirce, 1998a, 419). For the pragmatist Peirce, for all practical purposes, there is a satisfactory truth. A separate underlying difference between Peirce and Poincaré is related to “metaphysical assumptions” that may be drawn from theories in favor of bare equations” (Peirce, 1998a, 524, fn. 16). “Poincaré thought that all physical theories, besides having a mathematical, experimental, and hypothetical dimension, were also partly conventional, since any number of hypotheses can be selected, and their selection often rests on economical conventions” (Peirce, 1998a, 529, fn.10). For Peirce, Poincaré’s position was “contrary to demonstrated principles of logic...an error analogous to that of agnosticism” (Peirce, 1998a, 187). The relevance, or perhaps, satisfactory truth, of Poincaré’s mathematical theorizing (which eventually led to the development of complexity theory), was only realized when computers were available to generate and display fractals, non-regular geometric shapes that have the same degree of non-regularity on all scales. The patterns represented by fractals would have perhaps have satisfied Peirce about the relationship between their mathematics and a complex logic of relations.

<sup>122</sup> Peirce, a geographer, among his many other occupations, was “greatly influenced” by German mathematicians Georg Friedrich Riemann and Johann Listing. Riemann “initiated a general non-Euclidean system of geometry and contributed to the theory of functions” (Peirce, 1998a, 507, fn. 41). Peirce invented existential graphs as a way to diagram a pragmatist logic of relations.

The complication of “mental process” and “hidden laws of inward association” to reason further complicates, and I suggest, opens the door to complexity theory, by considering the effect of time. Here I begin to speculate on grounds for further research, a path I intend to follow. A question that Peirce was dealing with, one that plagued others at that time and since, concerned the order of an evolving world, with questions of its increasing life and growth (diversity) *or* tendency to uniformity and entropy. Peirce favored a view that

allows for diversity *and* specificity as part of the original character or endowment of things, which in the course of time may increase in some respects and diminish in others.” (Ketner, in Peirce, 1998b, xxvi)

In the world of ideas, where does “the new” come from? Peirce comments, (in autobiographical notes), that originality is “the ideal part of the mind’s work in investigation” and that in science, “scientific minds breathed an atmosphere of ideas which were so incessantly present that they were *unconscious* of them” (Peirce in Ketner, 1998, 261).<sup>123</sup> The unconscious plays a large role in Peirce’s pragmatist thought, figuring strongly in abduction, the first phase of pragmatist logical thought, which involves creative imagination. It is not added to reason; it begins the process of reasoning, and creativity, or as Peirce says, “genesis” begins in the abductive phase. Unlike those for whom imagination seems to represent the uncanny in the sense of the mystical, for Peirce, imagination springs from percepts based on *experience*. He means experience in its broadest sense, meaning interaction between the “organism” and its

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<sup>123</sup> Peirce laments in his autobiographical account, that his scientific approach has been misconstrued by his critics. Not only does he attack all problems by inquiring into their history and the methods through which the problem is resolved, “but the elementary ideas which are to enter into those methods, should be subjected to careful preliminary examination” (Peirce, in Ketner, 1998, 262).

“environment.”<sup>124</sup> In the scenario above, the scientist breathing the atmosphere of science is an organism in an environment, perhaps unaware of the influence of the environment and of what is germinating out of this interaction. It is a *poiesis*, in this phenomenological phase of thought that Peirce emphasizes, a creating based on experience and interaction. The logical difference that phenomenology makes is this: (1) percepts, pre-conscious sensory awareness based on experience (interactions), lead us to anticipate or envision, to have an idea; an “imaginary object” is expected; (2) but then, something quite different (from our idea) appears. Peirce calls this “the Strange Intruder in his abrupt entrance” (Peirce, 1998a, 154). Surprise (or doubt) occurs as the expectation is disrupted. In this moment, says Peirce, there is a double consciousness, between the anticipated and the actual occurrence. In this space of double consciousness, two opportunities arise. The first opportunity is to question the observation, to wonder and hypothesize about one’s observation.<sup>125</sup> The second opportunity arising from one’s double consciousness is reflective, to raise questions about one’s expectations, the surprise itself, the “Strange Intruder.”

Not only is experience important, but its effects are cumulative, as the Strange Intruder in its abrupt entrance might be likened to the effect of time, as a recursive effect of the past in the

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<sup>124</sup> The history of the word “uncanny” relates to supernatural influence. In the OED, “being associated with supernatural arts or powers” or “partaking of a supernatural character; mysterious, weird, uncomfortably strange or unfamiliar”. French feminist and poststructuralist Julia Kristeva (1991, 169–92) appropriates the idea of the *uncanny*, referring to the uncanny stranger, drawing on Melanie Klein’s approach to psychoanalytic theory, seeing the uncanny as that which is abjected, something which was a part of, but is no longer, something that remains oddly familiar, taking one back to primal experiences in the development of one’s subjectivities/identity. In curriculum theory Hongyu Wang (2004, 2005) draws on Kristeva’s uncanny stranger to develop her approach to identity in a multicultural world and intercultural dialogue.

<sup>125</sup> Abduction leads quickly, but secondarily to induction and deduction, and summarily, as *retroduction*, which is a judgment made of the conclusions of deduction in Peirce’s triadic schema.

present, a recollection, to be re-viewed in light of the present, and to inform the future. Small changes, over time, may make a significant difference.

The creativity of this triadic form of logic has greater import, I think, than being merely the roots of a vocabulary of complexity theory: emergence, the effect of small changes over time, reflexivity, iteration, and open dynamical systems. Here is a paradigmatic shift from reason based on pure mathematics—uniplanar, linear, Euclidean— to a triadic set of relations that begins with the interaction of the observer in its environment, i.e., the phenomenological *poiesis* of interaction. This shift points to a reconsideration of the type of interactions that can be generative in classrooms. Further, the fundamentally wrong-headed view that curriculum be pre-set, organized according to an external authority, as opposed to situated in the context of a specific community of learners, needs to be re-thought in light of pragmatist (Peirce and Dewey) recommendations of inquiry and interaction. Finally, re-reading progressive educationist John Dewey, in light of *poiesis* as an act of creating that emerges in and through interaction (rather than modernist or Aristotelian views of the poetic), may provide a deeper understanding of pragmatist principles and views on both education and democracy.

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## VITA

Donna moved away from her career in nursing and her family in Victoria, British Columbia, to marry Dr. William E. Doll, Jr., and to enroll at Louisiana State University in the doctoral program in curriculum and instruction. The tumultuous and disruptive immersion into life in Louisiana entailed gradual, partial glimpses of southern identity and culture; these views led to revelations of the subtle ways in which she perceived and identified herself, not necessarily captured by the term “Canadian,” but distinctly not “southern” and therefore, more than geographically out of place. This realization led to a questioning of identity, its construal and processes. Despite the current conservative political climate and her longstanding categorical opposition to war, she reclaimed her ancestral heritage by becoming a naturalized American citizen, now holding dual citizenship, complicating nationalistic identities. Donna’s academic interests are in American Pragmatist thought, particularly that of Charles Sanders Peirce and John Dewey, complexity theory, and representation in relation to curriculum and instruction. Relocating in Victoria following her husband’s imminent retirement from LSU, they will teach, research and write in Canada, the United States, and abroad. She looks forward to a rich and rewarding future with her granddaughter, children, Mom and Bill, and to one day attending cooking school in Tuscany.