Relating Process Philosophy to the Classroom: an Exploration of Alfred North Whitehead's Educational Vision.

Janis Pardue Hill
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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RELATING PROCESS PHILOSOPHY TO THE CLASSROOM: AN EXPLORATION OF ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD'S EDUCATIONAL VISION

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

Janis Pardue Hill
B.S., Northeast Louisiana University, 1969
M.A., Louisiana Tech University, 1984
December 1999

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A Dedication... to my family...
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I must begin my words of appreciation with a momentous thank you to William E. Doll, Jr., who first pointed me down that often spoken about but seldom traveled "road not taken." For me that road "less traveled" was process philosophy, and it was a totally new avenue of thinking. With Dr. Doll's assistance and encouragement, however, it became, over time, a well-worn path—much less treacherous—and in the end, quite amazingly, a familiar and comfortable avenue. For that I thank him. He is a kind, sagacious philosopher; and though he disagreed with me in my early writings when I referred to him as a Whiteheadian scholar, I shall now dare to contradict him and bestow upon him that tribute.

I am equally grateful to the other members of my committee: Dr. James L. Byo, Dr. Earl Cheek, Jr., Dr. Flo D. Durway, Dr. Joe L. Green, Dr. William F. Pinar. I cannot verbalize accolades glorious enough to describe, perhaps, one of the most unique combinations of talent, wisdom, and expertise ever assembled in Peabody Hall. Each is treasured for the support and encouragement they so willingly and cheerfully gave; I hope I have properly conveyed that to them in person. One of the great blessings of doctoral study has been the opportunity to study and converse with individuals who are widely acknowledged as "experts" in their areas of interest—to make those "connections" of which Whitehead speaks.

And to Flo Durway, a special "thank you" for the understanding, the genuine concern, the advice, and the insightful suggestions you made. Your greatness as an educator rests somewhere between your English teacher "voice" and your teacher-of-teachers wisdom. Please know that you are greatly admired.

To my family, friends, and colleagues—I thank you for your patience, your support, and your love throughout this adventure. You are loved and appreciated. The most magnificent discovery of this doctoral study is an even greater appreciation for home and family; for in this I am truly blessed.

Finally, to Charles... thank you for allowing me to be me... I could not have completed this endeavor without you. I close with one final thought... from a beloved English poet... "Grow old along with me/ the best is yet to be"...
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an exploration of the connections between the process philosophy and the educational thinking of Alfred North Whitehead. It develops the theory that Whitehead's philosophy of process is evident in "embryonic" form in his earlier educational writings, as well as The Aims of Education and Other Essays (1929), and that the complexities of process thinking are as intertwined and interconnected with the principles of process educational thought as the actual entity is intertwined and interconnected with the complex relations involved in its concrescence. The ultimate aim is to provide a clear picture of Whitehead's vision of education and the possibilities it offers the classroom teacher.

The study, a theoretical one, is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the framework for the dissertation and a personal reflection on initial encounters with process philosophy. Chapter 2 presents Whitehead's idea of "connectedness" and my natural progression toward a process mode of thought through the course of my career. William F. Pinar's theory of currere frames an autobiographical exploration of my twenty-five years in the classroom and my years of doctoral study. Chapter 3 explicates the philosophy of process, beginning with the actual entity and including all the basic elements. Chapter 4 examines Whitehead's educational writings, with a careful emphasis on the earlier essays and addresses, as well as a detailed look at his rhythm of education. Also explored is the fundamental notion of the student as a living organism and the necessity of application. This chapter concludes with a look at the critical opinions of philosophers and educators who have applied Whitehead's process philosophy to educational theory, e.g., Brumbaugh, Doll, Hendley, Holmes, and Lawrence.

Chapter 5, which is the crux of the study, applies a process philosophy of education to the practical world of the classroom, considering the combination of the theoretical and the practical realms of thought. The quest centers around the myriad of possibilities process thinking offers the teacher today. It concludes with a look at the phases of generalization and romance as windows to the very Platonic notion of transformation in the lives of both students and teacher.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Alfred North Whitehead—mathematician, scholar, academician—is known primarily as an eminent philosopher. A Victorian gentleman who left London to spend the latter part of his life and career in America, he wrote numerous learned treatises, lectures, and books in the realms of mathematics, science, and philosophy. His *Science and the Modern World* (1925) and *Principia Mathematica* (1910-1913), written with Bertrand Russell, are among the notable works in those fields; and *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (1978/1929) is the seminal work for process thinkers of every age. One of the great thinkers at Harvard in a period labeled by Lowe (1990) as “truly Harvard’s second golden age in philosophy” (p. 264), Alfred North Whitehead is also one who, since his death in 1947, has come to be recognized as the key figure in process philosophy.

The philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead is a topic of scholarly discussion in a vast array of disciplines and interests. These areas, which are as diverse as they are vast, include topics like theology, physics, medicine, ecology, and feminist studies. Of interest to the teacher are discussions applying Whitehead’s process philosophy to educational theory and the classroom. Whitehead’s most widely known educational work *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (1929a) offers great insight into his thinking on both learning and the learner, as do *Modes of Thought* (1938) and other of his philosophical treatises. However, it is to *Process and Reality* (1978/1929), the work most often called his *magnum opus*, that the educator must finally go to seek out the fundamental concepts of process thinking; for it is only through an understanding of Whitehead’s perception of process and reality that one can fully understand, appreciate, and apply Whitehead’s educational vision to the reality of the classroom.

In *Modes of Thought* (1938), Alfred North Whitehead writes of the “entertainment of alternatives . . . [proposing that] life is the enjoyment of emotion which was then, which is now, and which will be later” (p. 229). The past connects

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to the present which connects to the future, which also connects to the past; for in a
Whiteheadian world “connectedness is of the essence of all things of all types . . . .
No fact is merely itself” (p. 13). There must be relating, and as I have discovered
through many readings and rereadings, there must always be a connecting to the
“beyond”; for according to Whitehead, the process—the connections, the relating—is
unending. Every “drop” or “pulse” of experience is a burst of creative glory, and
each one leads to another. Experience is at the center of process philosophy, a
unique picture of experience that “becomes” and at the same time “perishes,” but
which in the “perishing” achieves a sort of immortality as possibilities for future
experiences. The world is always in process. Buried deep within the complex,
pseudotechnical vocabulary that spells out the philosophy of process thinking is a
portrait of the process which for Whitehead is the reality of life.

This dissertation explores the key concepts of Whitehead’s philosophy of
process, as well as the chief tenets of his educational writings. Because
experience is at the center of process philosophy, the emphasis is first on
understanding the philosophy of process thinking as a portrait of the experience of
existence and the process of life. Central features, such as the actual entity,
prehension, concrescence, and nexus, are examined. Finally, this work moves the
theoretical into the realm of the practical and applies Whitehead’s process
philosophy of education to the “everydayness” of the classroom. The ultimate
goal is to link Whitehead’s “relating” and “relations” to the classroom, reflecting the
importance of connections and connection-making in a process philosophy of
education, as well as proposing them as an avenue to a classroom filled with
excitement and creative activity. In the process classroom both the students and
the teacher experience a zest for learning.

Process and Reality (1978/1929) and The Aims of Education (1929a) form
the basis of my initial examination and explication of Whitehead’s philosophy of
process and educational thinking. The study, a theoretical one, is divided into five
major sections: Chapter 1 introduces the plan and the framework of the
dissertation. Chapter 2 presents the Whiteheadian notion of “connectedness” and
my natural progression toward process thinking during the course of my career. William F. Pinar's theory of *curare* frames an autobiographical exploration of my twenty-five years in the English classroom, as well as the last semesters of doctoral study. Chapter 3 explicates the fundamental concepts in Whitehead's process philosophy. The analysis begins with the actual entity and the prehensions, both fundamental to an understanding of the theory, and includes, as well, a study of other essential elements. Chapter 4 looks in detail at Whitehead's educational writings, with an emphasis on the earlier essays and addresses which are frequently overlooked, and includes a careful examination of his rhythm of education, a major concern of process scholars today. The other essential ideas, e.g., his notion of the student as a living organism and the necessity of application, are also considered. This chapter concludes with a critical analysis of philosophers and educators who have applied Whitehead's thinking to educational theory. Among those authors are Robert Brumbaugh, William Doll, Brian Hendley, and Nathaniel Lawrence.

Finally, moving from theory to practice, Chapter 5 applies a process philosophy of education to the classroom today. This is the crux of the paper: the myriad of possibilities process thinking offers the teacher in today's world. To begin this study, I return at this point to my initial reflections as I began the exploration of Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy—a reflection that evolved into the present dissertation. Like Whitehead's rhythm of education, I too moved continually during this "experience" through the stages of romance, precision, and generalization. Therefore, like the experience itself, this dissertation is an exercise "in process."

**Process Thinking and Teaching: A Teacher's Reflection**

In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead names the three notions of "creativity," "many," and "one" as the "ultimate notions." But the one he lists first—"creativity"—is the one he describes as "the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact. It is that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively"
(p. 21). This Whiteheadian notion of creativity offers great wisdom to the teacher seeking to create a classroom filled with imagination and knowledge. It deserves the classification ultimate; for it is an "eternal activity," the drive that fuels the constant, endless production of new experiences. Creativity is the force behind the "becomings," which, finally, all students realize (after many tedious readings of Process and Reality) is the tenet central to all of Whitehead: the world is always becoming; in the becoming there is being; so in the becoming we find reality—reality is in the becoming.

So simple, yet so complex—"It's in the 'becoming' that one finds the beauty, for in the 'becoming' the actual occasion is in its glory. Creativity is at its peak. It surges and for a moment—for a drop, or a pulse—it blooms." These words I wrote at least a month before I finally saw—truly saw, that is—what Whitehead's "process and reality" talk was all about. Then, in an instant, I saw clearly what had been before only momentary glimpses. Such is the nature of Whitehead: his thinking is beyond an instant focus. It requires reading and reflecting and then a multitude of rereadings and re-reflecting. But the result is worth the struggle, for when a genuine understanding is acquired, the magnitude of his philosophy is obvious—the crux is to be found in the experience, the becoming. In Process and Reality Whitehead writes:

> Every condition to which the process of becoming conforms in any particular instance, has its reason either in the character of some actual entity in the actual world of that concrescence, or in the character of the subject which is in process of concrescence. . . . This ontological principle means that actual entities are the only reasons; so that to search for a reason is to search for one or more actual entities. (p. 24)

The central tenet, once again, revolves around the principle that Whitehead's process world is permeated with becomings.

Becoming, itself, is transformational; it is the actual occasion in its moment of glory. Becoming also contains the past, and Whitehead warns us not to place too much emphasis on the past. In The Aims of Education, he cautions:

> The only use of a knowledge of the past is to equip us for the present. No more deadly harm can be done to young minds than
by depreciation of the present. The present contains all that there is. It is holy ground; for it is the past, and it is the future. (p. 3)

This passage had a profound effect on my thinking. It spoke to me on the first reading before my acquaintance with *Process and Reality*; it speaks to me now with new meaning as I revisit it. I believe now, many readings later, that Whitehead calls the present “holy” because of what takes place there. In that one moment or “pulse” or “drop” of the present, there is an instant of “becoming”; and it only lasts for a pulse, so it is, indeed, sacred. It is very likely the most sacred because it is a new creation. It contains the past and looks to the future, but it is a totally new creation. The present, which pulsates there precisely in the center of the experience, is the very essence of Whitehead philosophy; and the respect he holds for it can be seen in the influence it had on his entire sense of personal history. As one examines the decisions Whitehead made in his personal life, it is obvious his belief in “the holy ground” of the present guided him. Whitehead was clearly seeking a way to move forward when he left London for America—he was on a quest to create new “becomings.” Many readings and reflections later, I still find Whitehead’s description of the present as “holy ground” truly profound; and it is a passage that will, I am certain, continue to speak to me in my future “becomings,” for I see in it the possibility for a transformed “present” in the classroom.

The present slips from us—moment by moment. The future becomes the past right before our eyes, and we cannot do anything to halt it. It is elusive and slips away, moving without a glance into the shadowy realm of the past. As I think on the present from this perspective, the present, that “holy ground,” becomes an ephemeral creature, a wise being. And this wise being suggests that I apply what Whitehead instructs: use knowledge of the past to equip myself and my students for the present, that elusive present of the classroom that moves in a steady, determined stride into the shadow-filled past. That class I just finished, the school day that just ended—it will not return! It has perished. Did that conversation, poem, or novel help in any way to equip those young minds for the future, a future changing so quickly it’s a frightening force for even those who thrive on change?
Time is the teacher's adversary in the classroom. As a teacher of literature, I want to introduce the great minds and the great works to my students; as a teacher of life, I want them to connect those works from the past to the present and into the future. I want my students to experience the joy, the pleasure of those connections, but always there's so little time, so many centuries, so much to teach! And this was my struggle before Whitehead. However, after reading and reflecting, reflecting and writing, and reflecting and rewriting, I am sure now of one great truth! This philosopher from the past, from another age, has much to say to the teacher of today. As I revisit again and again the passages in which I have steeped myself, I find in Whitehead hope for the teacher struggling always with "not enough time"; for in the classroom, Time assumes quite often the role of the villain. In fact, I am reminded of Milton's great sonnet "How Soon Hath Time" in which the poet accuses Time of being a "subtle thief" who has stolen his "three and twentieth year" (1957, p. 76), which is exactly what Time does in the classroom. Time steals the hour, the day, the year away from both the teacher and the students.

In the classroom there is never enough time. I am troubled daily with the interruptions of the average school day. We are victims of systems that demand we assume responsibility for tasks that we, as teachers, should not be responsible for. We are victims, as well, of a society that demands we rush through life, dwellers in the Age of Information, an out-of-control society in a race with time. I see this sprint through life beginning in the classroom; and as I watch students caught up in the race—"in a hurry" sometimes when there is no apparent need to "rush"—I am anxious and concerned for them. Therefore, Whitehead's voice is comforting as I return to passages which offer not the sole answer but another perspective from which to ponder this predicament brought on by the post-modern world in which we live. And as always, I return to the classroom and ask, "What's the connection for my students? How does it apply in my room?"

Those questions bring me full circle; and I find myself at the starting point of my acquaintance with Alfred N. Whitehead, facing the lines from The Aims of
Education (1929a) with which I began those first thoughts: "Let the main ideas which are introduced into a child's education be few and important, and let them be thrown into every combination possible" (p. 3). From the beginning I was taken with the passage, and I returned to it again and again; now, once more, I return to it in yet another revisiting of that first reflection.

"Few and important," Whitehead writes. The profundity of the suggestion strikes a chord that resounds and reverberates somewhere deep within my teacher mentality--and I am on one level ecstatic and on another level sorely troubled. I am ecstatic, for here lies the answer to my troubles: I am trying to teach too much. I am troubled, for here lies a contradiction to a basic philosophy that I have carried with me, perhaps, since I was myself a young student: I want to learn and I want to learn much. It's an idea quite out of keeping with the thinking of the age of specialization in which we live; it's also a very humanistic idea which most consider impractical in today's world. A part of me, however, understands that very idealistic dream. The humanistic side wants to believe there is worth in a striving to perfect all human possibilities. And although I realize it is an impossible task, the hopeful teacher side is moved by this magnificent and grand longing. There is much to be learned by a striving to be the best one can be in as many areas as possible.

I understand that great dream; but now, after many days and nights with Process and Reality, I also understand better, not completely (never completely, in Whitehead's world) the danger in "too much knowledge." I see, as well, the wisdom in the phrase "few and important"; for it offers a different perspective from which to face that struggle with time which is so much a part of my everyday existence. A careful reading of Whitehead suggests to me that I must accept the fact that I cannot teach my students everything; and he is right, and I have attempted this impossible feat so many times in my eagerness to teach as much as I can. I must remember Whitehead's advice when he proposes:

We enunciate two educational commandments, "Do not teach too many subjects," and again, "What you teach, teach thoroughly"... From the very beginning of his education, the child should experience the joy of discovery. The discovery which he has to
make is that general ideas give an understanding of that stream of events which pours through his life, which is his life. (1929a, p. 2)

"Few and important"—that's part of the secret. I must be content with teaching a little and teaching it well. Of what use is committing to memory mountains of minute details? Students will survive, although some teachers still refuse to accept the fact, without knowing every Faulkner novel and the date published or even without knowing the number of sonnets written by Shakespeare. I must recognize that my students will, without a doubt, be highly successful and lead full, satisfying lives without remembering the birth date and death date of all the authors we read; there is much more that is more important.

The tiny details are only important to a student of literature or an English teacher. This I accept now and truly believe; therefore, I am delighted to find a very similar sentiment expressed by Whitehead in his essay "The Rhythm of Education" (1929a). In this essay, written in a time very different from today about a student very different from today's young scholar, he proposes a philosophy still very applicable for today's classroom and for today's student. Whitehead writes:

Whatever be the detail with which you cram your student, the chance of his meeting in after-life exactly that detail is almost infinitesimal; and if he does meet it, he will probably have forgotten what you taught him. . . . The really useful training yields a comprehension of a few general principles with a thorough grounding in the way they apply . . . Your learning is useless . . . till you have lost your text-books, burnt your lecture notes, and forgotten the minutiae which you learnt by heart for the examination. What, in the way of detail, you continually require will stick in your memory as obvious facts . . .; and what you casually require can be looked up in any work of reference. (p. 26)

Learning is so much more than gathering masses of details through the memorization process, a fact that some educators still fail to acknowledge, but a fact I truly believe is essential for a meaningful education. I also believe that learning occurs quite naturally when the teacher points the student to "that stream of events which pours through his life" (1929a, p. 2), a phrase which I truly understood only after turning to Process and Reality and a prolonged reflection of process and its relation to teaching and life. I see now that Whitehead is at all times talking about relations and becoming—and it never ends.
So does this mean we can dismiss entirely the minute details and specific facts and deal only in broad generalities? On the contrary, some facts are so much a part of what I label a “core knowledge” that they cannot and must not be ignored. I believe that a good teacher knows what must be taught and what can be omitted; it is his or her responsibility to know! I was elated to find support for these personal beliefs which have become an integral part of my own philosophy of teaching in Whitehead’s essay “The Rhythmic Claims of Freedom and Discipline” (1929a). I agree wholeheartedly with Whitehead when he asserts:

I am sure that one secret of a successful teacher is that he has formulated quite clearly in his mind what the pupil has got to know in precise fashion. He will cease from half-hearted attempts to worry his pupils with memorising a lot of irrelevant stuff of inferior importance. The secret of success is pace, and the secret of pace is concentration. But, in respect to precise knowledge, the watchword is pace, pace, pace. Get your knowledge quickly, and then use it. If you can use it, you will retain it. (p. 36)

Once again, Whitehead advises “few and important.” The phraseology is a bit different—he says to dismiss “a lot of irrelevant stuff of inferior importance”—but the meaning is still the same: teach a little (of what is of importance) and teach it well. I find solace in this advice from a past philosopher/educator; and as I begin to absorb it and make it a part of my teacher-thinking, I see also that this tenet offers a way to manage my struggle with Time. It is impossible to teach a child all that we wish him or her to know. Today’s world is a complex, technological world where daily our knowledge expands and where specialization is a requirement for success in most fields of study. “Few and important” must become a way of thinking for the classroom teacher!

In like manner, the phrase “in as many combinations as possible” must become a natural mode of thinking in the teacher’s philosophy. Whitehead advises that we return—combine—return—look at that idea or combination of ideas from another perspective—go back and pull that thought into the present and combine and rethink. Let that idea speak from a different stance. I like the word emerging; for I see in this a notion or a student always growing (moving, fluid), finding new meanings and then combining those with former meanings from the past, and then,
finally, looking toward the future. Whitehead (1938) sees the future as important. He writes, "The present receives the past and builds the future" (p. 43); and in that premise, I think, he points to the importance of the relationship among the past, present, and future. They are all essential; but once again, it is the present, that "holy ground," that he notes as situated between the past and the future. This was part of his admiration for William James whom he called a "modern man," saying that his mind was based on the learning of the past, but "his greatness was his marvelous sensitivity to the ideas of the present" (p. 4).

That "drop" of experience, that burst of glory in the becoming, is once again evident in the words of Whitehead; and, most importantly, the process is unending. This must be the concern of the teacher, not the impossible task of making sure that every child in the class understands everything. What is understanding after all? In *Modes of Thought* Whitehead says that to understand understanding in its full extent . . . is a hopeless task. We can enlighten fragmentary aspects of intelligence. But there is always an understanding beyond our area of comprehension. The reason is that the notion of intelligence in pure abstraction is a myth. Thus a complete understanding is a perfect grasp of the Universe in its totality. We are finite beings; and such a grasp is denied to us. (p.58)

Whitehead accepts without question the inadequacy of a human being to achieve complete understanding. He goes on to say, however, that acceptance of this premise "is not to say that there are finite aspects of things which are intrinsically incapable of entering into human knowledge"; on the contrary, "we can know anything in some of its perspectives" (pp. 58-59).

The application for the teacher here is easily seen: Whitehead places more importance on the process of knowing than on the amount one knows. There is also great wisdom in Whitehead’s assertion that “understanding is never a completed static state of mind” (p. 60), for in this idea is an openness which I believe is essential in the classroom of today and which I see as, perhaps, the most salient characteristic of the post-modern classroom. From the perspective of openness, it is not good to understand completely, for if we do, the door to further reflection is closed; and the process thinker—the process educator—aims toward
opening doors, not closing them. The process classroom is, in fact, a classroom
filled with doors; and it is at all times in process, in true Whiteheadian fashion, a
classroom and a curriculum exploring and reflecting—searching always for more
understanding.

In the classroom some teachers strive for complete understanding of a short
story or a poem. The student reads, reflects, analyzes, discusses, and acquires
understanding. This has been the goal—understanding. The thinking is that the
students know all they need to know so they put that away (sometimes forever).
They close the system down. The lesson is over; the class has completed that
assignment; the goal has been accomplished. But how many great connections
were lost? If only they had returned for another look, might there not have been
another perspective from which to view a character, perhaps, or an image? Every
year I watch and listen as students uncover some of the same images and themes
and truths I uncovered the first time I experienced a poem; and then I am
privileged to witness the wonder, the discovery, of points that I had not considered
that first time, and the return opens up infinite possibilities for me—many readings
later, many years later. Whitehead (1938) proposes, "My thesis is that when we
realize ourselves as engaged in a process of penetration, we have a fuller
self-knowledge than when we feel a completion of the job of intelligence" (p. 60).
This tells me, the classroom teacher, that we should not strive for completion; we
should strive, rather, for penetration. Completion indicates closure and an end to
the quest for knowledge, an end to the learning process; and this is a fatal
suggestion, for learning must not stop. Learning, like the process Whitehead
describes, must never end.

I fear that many students (as well as their parents) today perceive education
through a tunnel; there's only always the end of the tunnel beckoning. The student
heads toward that end point with no detours, enclosed in a process that moves
through very structured segments or stages to the end: from grade school to
secondary education to the university experience and, finally, to that ultimate goal—
graduation. Everything—every learning activity, every learning experience—is
geared toward accomplishment of that goal, but the goal suffocates the experiences.

Goals should promote positive experiences, for goals are good--dreams are good. But the concept of learning as such a linear, structured, closed experience has frightening limitations. In this kind of environment, the student becomes a "runaway train"; the young person is, figuratively speaking, a train racing to its destination without the ability to stop along the way--no layovers for enriching experiences, no overnight stops for reflection--only always the "out of control" journey. Don't stop to think; just get the right answer and hurry on. In this kind of philosophy, there exists no room for cultivation of the joy of learning. The emphasis is ever on reaching that point in the future when the student completes (what an ominous word) his/her education, receives the diploma, and heads off into the world. This young person is prepared for life and life's experiences, or is he/she? The process educator would say, "Probably not, for that student is too programmed for endings and has never been taught to look for new beginnings and the glory of those 'pulses' of experience of which Whitehead writes."

Whitehead proposes that we "experience" the world. He says, in fact, "I am now pleading that our whole experience is composed out of our relationship to the rest of things, and of the formation of new relationships constitutive of things to come" (1938, p. 43). In a Whiteheadian world there is always the "beyond." The process—the connections, the relating—is an unending process. Likewise, in a Whiteheadian classroom there should also be always an awareness of the "beyond." The student conscious of himself/herself as part of an ever-moving process will know joy in learning and the opportunity to consider that "entertainment of alternatives . . . [to see that] life is the enjoyment of emotion, derived from the past and aimed at the future" (p. 229).

This is the lesson Whitehead teaches—a lesson which must become a part of every classroom if the teacher hopes to bring vitality into the lives of the students. And the lesson must be founded on feelings, or in Whiteheadian terms, prehensions. The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) defines prehension as "a
grasping with the mind; the interactions that exists between a subject and an entity or event” (p. 353). This definition describes very accurately exactly what I want my students to do. I want them to take hold of ideas with a willingness and an eagerness to learn; and I want there to be interaction, an exchange of ideas—a conversation that is unending and open to multiple perspectives. This kind of conversation fills a classroom with joy and excitement, for it encourages an attitude of awe and wonder in life and learning, very much like Whitehead’s own description of his philosophy, recorded late in life in a letter to a friend:

There is no suggestion in my mind—nor (I hope) in my works—of a clear-cut adequate philosophic system. All we can do is gaze dimly at the infinitude of things, which lies beyond our finite apprehension. Words are inadequate for experience, and experience is inadequate to grasp the infinitude of the universe. Of course, this is a commonplace; but it cannot be repeated too often. (qtd. in Lowe, 1990, p. 265)

In this passage I find sage advice for the teacher: accept (or grasp or prehend) that the world is in process for infinity and apply that to the classroom. Students must know they are part of an endless process so that they will seize the opportunities to open doors and to create and to begin again.

The study of Whitehead’s process philosophy and the application of this to the classroom opens up an infinite number of opportunities. However, the greatest wisdom, for me as a teacher and as a human being struggling with the adversities of daily living in a chaotic world, rests in the cosmology of Whitehead, a cosmology I see clearer every time, or on every occasion, that I return to one of his works. And as I reflect and write one more time, I realize that this entire study is a personal metaphor of all that I have been attempting to explain, explicate—illuminate. For in the process, I have achieved over and over—endlessly—the “becomings” of Which Whitehead writes. Whitehead’s cosmology I interpret as centered ultimately around the notion of self-creativity. In the midst of the process is creation; fueling the process is that drive Whitehead names “the universal of universals.” In that “holy ground” of the present is the object of the quest—the “self-creation of the new creature” (1938, p. 228). The beauty and joy in life revolve
around self-realization, which Whitehead claims "is the ultimate fact of facts. An actuality is self-realizing, and whatever is self-realizing is an actuality" (1978/1929, p. 222). This is what life is about: self-creation--becomings--feelings--again and again; and it relates to everything and everyone; "we are in the world and the world is in us" (1938, p. 227). A core concept of Whitehead's cosmology, the phrase summons an image pointing, perhaps, to the greatest Truth of all.

These are the lessons I learned from Alfred North Whitehead and his cosmology, not from the first reading and reflecting but from the many revisitings. Now as a Whiteheadian thinker, I plan to return oftentimes, always seeking new creations, always pulled by that "insistent craving that zest for existence be refreshed by the ever-present, unfading importance of our immediate actions, which perish and yet live for evermore" (1978/1929, p. 351).

**Process Thinking and Teaching: A Teacher's Quest**

And with these reflections, I ended my first phase of "romance" with process thinking, not realizing at the time I would revisit the familiar passages many more times in the future. Neither did I know at that point that the latter stage would bring me around once again to a phase I quoted in those final lines--Whitehead's comment that "we are in the world and the world is in us" (p. 227). A powerful thought, I did not know at that moment the extent of its power and meaning and that, indeed, the phase held the key to the "other level" of meaning I was seeking in Whitehead. That would occur a couple of years down the road, but I was, at last, on my way--thus began this study and the search for a meaningful application of process philosophy in the classroom.

**End Notes**

1. Whitehead subtitled the great philosophical work of his life An Essay in Cosmology, a point which, deserves attention, especially in light of the fact that the book is most often referred to as simply Process and Reality. An extensive discussion of process philosophy, the work provides also an explanation of his thoughts on the relationship of human beings to all parts of the universe, including God; and no student of Whitehead can read very much of his work without realizing that the nature of God is also a major concern of the great thinker. And as one might expect, Whitehead's God is part of the process. Believing that God must be included in his scheme of things, Whitehead says, "In the first place, God is not to
be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification. Viewed as primordial, he is the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality. In this aspect, he is not before all creation, but with all creation" (1978/1929, p. 343.) This brief treatment of Whitehead’s idea of God and His relationship to the world is only a note and certainly not sufficient in itself for an understanding of Whitehead’s cosmology. I include it only to point the interested reader to the wealth of critical commentary available on process philosophy from the theological perspective.

2. Patrick Slattery’s discussion of time in his paper, “A Postmodern Vision of Time and Learning: A Response to the National Education Commission Report Prisoners of Time,” is an excellent treatment of time as seen through the eyes of a curriculum theorist who has also stood in the classroom and sat in the administrator’s chair. Having worked under the constraints of the modernist conception of time which he claims has “resulted in an exaggerated emphasis on manipulation of time” (1995b, p. 612) and an unhealthy rigidity in the curriculum, Slattery recommends a post-modern vision of time. This philosophy, he says, offers opportunities for creativity, energy, hope, and, above all, release for educators and students who have become “prisoners of time” (p. 630). Also noteworthy is Slattery’s 1995 work Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era.

3. In the classroom he describes as “post-modern,” William Doll (1993) advises against the “static state of mind,” those “inert facts,” and closed doors and proposes, instead, open doors where “learning and understanding come through dialogue and reflection . . . [and where] we ‘negotiate passages’ between ourselves and others, between ourselves and our texts” (p. 156). In this curriculum, the emphasis is on keeping the conversation going, looking (in Whiteheadian fashion) always to new beginnings and never for an ending. In describing his post-modern vision, Doll pictures this curriculum as “open not closed; like post-modernism itself, it is Janus-faced, eclectic, interpretive” (p. 178).
CHAPTER 2
MOVING TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF PROCESS THINKING

In Modes of Thought (1938), Alfred North Whitehead writes, "Connectedness is of the essence of all things of all types . . . . The present receives the past and builds the future" (pp. 13, 43). Contemplations of a philosopher from another time, these words are, in fact, words "without time," embodying a timelessness which reaches into every realm of thought, every genre, and every individual life. Connections have been, are, and continue to be a salient part of Whitehead's philosophy; in addition, they hold a myriad of possibilities for discovery and reflection of Whitehead's process thinking by not only the student of process thought but also humankind in general. Connections compose the "everydayness" of existence; and they make up, as well, the periods of time when the sparks of creativity explode into magnificent moments of experience. A part of all things at all times, connections possess the capacity to direct us from the past to the present and onward into the future. As we live, we connect; as we connect, we enrich the process of living: herein lies the sagacity of Whitehead's contemplations on and statements about connections—for the philosopher, as well as individuals from every walk of life.

Whitehead's world is a relational world; but it is also a world which, on careful examination, abounds with connections, a word whose history is pertinent to Whitehead's notions. The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) defines the word connection as "the linking together of words or ideas in speech or thought; consecutiveness, continuity or coherence of ideas; contextual relation of thought, speech, or writing; [and] context" (p. 746). Derived from the Latin, the word was used originally in England in the seventeenth century with the etymological spelling of connexion. The OED makes specific note that the word is not found in Shakespeare nor the Bible of 1611; it is a word which came into common use in the English language in the mid-1700s. Central to each of the numerous definitions that present the history of the word is the concept of linking, joining, and (the concept most often connected to Whitehead's process philosophy) relating. The
connections and relations between and among Whitehead's use of the concepts and words *connections* and *relations* are many. They are terms paramount in the understanding of not only his philosophical musings but his other thoughts and writings as well, especially his writings on education. Likewise, connections are important in this exploration because, although they have only in the last few years centered themselves at the base of my philosophy of teaching, they have at all times been present and a part of my teacher thinking.

I believe the conviction of the importance of student connection-making was present in my first classroom, even though it was not an active part of every day's activities. As a product of a structured educational environment, I mirrored, in the beginning, my former teachers as primarily transmitters of knowledge; and like them, I tried to fill my students' heads with facts. But there were also class discussions and conversations in which students thought and connected. It just didn't happen often enough. In the beginning my classroom was too much like the classrooms of my past, a past inhabited by a host of outstanding (though admittedly conventional and sometimes authoritarian) teachers. And they all played significant roles in the teacher I am today, some more than others. Early in my career, of course, their impact was stronger; and I reflected, in style and technique, their styles and techniques; but as I grew as a teacher, I began to change. In fact, as the years passed, I noticed that I began to seek change.

A vastly different teacher from the teacher I was in the past, I am far removed from the very structured transmitter of facts who began and modeled a classroom and an image, as do many neophytes in the field, like the teachers in her past. The teacher I am today is one who has moved steadily through the years toward a process philosophy of education and the possibilities it offers to connect former and present experiences and then move on to even greater connections and richer meanings. The longer I have taught, the more I have realized the importance of incorporating "connecting" experiences into classroom conversations. I have also learned through the years that it is acceptable to share in class my own personal experiences which relate to the poem or the story or the novel being
explored. Finally, I have come to realize that connections in my life to my past and future possess the greatest potential of all, the potential to make me a better teacher. The journey from transmitter of facts to process thinker has been a long one, filled with obstacles, side paths, and detours; but in the end it has been a profitable one. I was, myself, "in process" and did not realize it.

Introduction to William F. Pinar's theory of currere, and a subsequent study of his autobiographical approach, was one of several key events that eventually pointed me toward an awareness of my tendency to teach and view life as a process. Although not a process philosopher, Pinar approaches in his thinking some of the boundaries of process thought; and looking broadly at both from a very general perspective, I see several commonalities between the two approaches. The most prominent similarity is that both currere and process philosophy look to past experiences; in both, the experience is significant. They also, in different ways, pull parts of the past into the present, so that the past eventually becomes a part of the present and a dynamic in the synthesis which is also a major phase of each. Pinar refers to his final stage as synthesis whereas Whitehead uses the word concrescence or generalization.

Most importantly, however, both currere and process philosophy offer the opportunity for greater understanding of self and the world. Within each is a passion and a zest for life. That, both professionally and personally, is the essential link—the key connection that directs me to the possibilities offered by relating two diverse educational thinkers from different ends of the twentieth century. As I contemplate currere and its connections to process philosophy, I realize that currere provides a window to a view of my movement to a process mode of thinking. Therefore, to explore and to attempt an understanding of my journey toward process philosophy, I turn now to William Pinar and his autobiographical theory of curriculum—a theorist and a theory that, although not Whiteheadian, appreciate and encourage connections among one's past, present, and future.
William F. Pinar and Autobiography

William F. Pinar and Madeleine R. Grumet originated their theory of autobiography during the 1970s in an attempt to develop a method that would bring the field of curriculum theory to life. Concerned that the traditional approach dominating the existing modes of discourse was static and impersonal, they sought an alternative course of looking at curriculum that would be vibrant and responsive to the individual. This alternative course they discovered in currere, the Latin infinitive of curriculum, which means literally "to run the course" or "the running of the course"; and they used the concept of currere to develop their theory of autobiography (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 515). Ignored and criticized when it first appeared, currere is now recognized as a prominent discourse in curriculum theory of the latter half of the twentieth century and acknowledged, as well, as a major force in reconceptualizing the field. Most importantly, autobiography is the logical approach for the teacher seeking to uncover knowledge of self amidst the experiences of the classroom.

The autobiographical method of William Pinar (1994c) offers an avenue for teachers to "begin a lengthy, systematic search of [their] inner experience" (p. 17) and to begin to acquire not only a greater understanding of self but also a voice with which to speak of one’s experiences. A method that he began to formulate in the very early 70s, autobiography is founded on Pinar’s belief that the curriculum field at that time had become preoccupied with the exterior structure (the goals and objectives, scope and sequence, assessment) and had forgotten the individual experiences of both students and teachers. This, according to Pinar (Pinar et al., 1995), is one of the things wrong with the American educational system and the reason "we graduate, credentialized but crazed, erudite but fragmented shells of the human possibility" (p. 519); and this was the condition he sought to correct in the concept of currere, which "seeks to understand the contribution academic studies makes to one’s understanding of his or her life" (p. 520). Currere, which takes the individual as the primary source of data and uses the individual’s experiences to lead to a greater understanding of self, returns the individual to the
In his essay "The Method of Curriere," Pinar (1994b) explains that, although there are many questions to be answered, the predominant one is: what has been and what is now the nature of my educational experience? By taking as hypothesis that I do not know the answer to this question, I take myself and my existential experience as a data source... My hunch is that by working in the manner I will describe, I will obtain information that will move me biographically, and not linearly, but multidimensionally. (p. 20)

The person and the experience take on greater significance.

Curriere is a four-step method: it is regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical. In the first step, the regressive step, the main purpose is to observe past experiences in school, from the early classroom to the teachers to interaction with classmates--all aspects are to be noted. In the words of Pinar, "One returns to the past, to capture it as it was, and as it hovers over the present" (p. 21). The second step moves in the opposite direction; it is progressive and looks to the future, tomorrow as well as a few years from now. In this step one contemplates where one is going, looking at the relation between intellectual interests and one's private life. This progressive step "influences, in complicated ways, the present; it forms the present" (p. 24). In the analytical step, which is the third phase of curriere, one faces the present, describing it and then mentally photographing it, looking carefully at one's responses. Pinar suggests in this step a phenomenological bracketing to loosen oneself and make one more free; he advises: "Juxtapose the three photographs: past, present, future. What are their complex, multi-dimensional interrelations? How is the future present in the past, the past in the future, and the present in both?" (p. 26). The final step of curriere is synthetical. In this step the individual is told to "look at oneself concretely, as if in a mirror [and ask in one's] own voice, what is the meaning of the present?" (p. 26). In the final step the self comes together:

The Self is available to itself in physical form. The intellect, residing in physical form, is part of the Self. The Self is not a concept the intellect has of itself. The intellectual is an appendage of the Self, a medium, like the body, through which the Self and the whole are accessible to themselves. Mind in its place, I conceptualize the present situation.

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The four steps of *currere* provide a means, as Pinar writes in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," (1994c), "to look inside ourselves as well as outside, and begin to describe, as honestly and concretely as we can, what our internal experience is" (p. 16). The method provides also limitless possibilities for application in today's classroom and in the lives of today's teachers.

*Currere* returns the individual to the curriculum, a radical proposal at its inception in the 1970s—a major field of scholarship today. Directing attention away from the traditional structure of goals, objectives, and assessment, it moves the person, the individual, to the center. It is, according to Madeleine Grumet (1976), "what the individual does with the curriculum, his active reconstruction of his passage through its social, intellectual, physical structures" (p. 111). In other words, the individual's journey is infinitely more important than the school building and the "school-things" which, to some educators, have taken a more prominent place than the child. *Currere* reminds me, the classroom teacher, to never ever forget that the child's experience comes before the bulletin board, the workbook, and the textbook. It reminds me also that my story deserves careful attention as well; for as Grumet (1988b) points out,

> The reading and rereading of our stories create a linguistic bridge between our public and private worlds, between what we know and what we teach to others. . . . For what it means to teach and learn is related to what it means to be male or female and to our experiences of reproduction and nurturance, domesticity, sexuality, nature, knowledge, and politics. (pp. 537-538)

In *currere* the individual can never be separated from the individual experience.

*Currere*, most often discussed by the curriculum theorists or by the professor in the education building of the state university, is a concept which many classroom teachers have never encountered, which is unfortunate, because there is great potential for application in the classroom. In fact, *currere* offers the classroom teacher a chance to revitalize herself, her classroom, and her students. As the classroom teacher looks carefully at herself and her experiences through the
method of *currere*, she directs attention to self; and for the first time, perhaps, focuses attention on who she is, where she is going, and the role she plays in the lives of those around her. The autobiographical approach provides a means for careful introspection, which the classroom teacher frequently neglects in tending to the needs of her students. It directs the vision of the teacher inward, and in this redirection lies the potential for self-knowledge and self-renewal through an autobiographical conversation with oneself. Self-knowledge and self-renewal--here rest the concerns often ignored by the classroom teacher; and from the viewpoint of one who has walked and talked in this realm for over twenty-five years, here resides also a theoretical approach with possibility for practical application for the classroom teacher.

I see in the method of autobiography an avenue for discovery of self--multiple connections for the teacher moving among multiple worlds. Teachers need to cultivate connection-making; they need to find the time in their busy worlds to regress, progress, analyze, and synthesize--to listen to themselves in quiet moments--a difficult task to accomplish in today's rushed, sometimes frantic classroom where every minute is filled with demands that must be met and voices that must be answered. Levin (1989) says there is an absence of silence in our world today; and this is especially true for the classroom teacher, who must search diligently to find a quiet place. Nevertheless, the teacher must locate for herself that private place away from the busy, noisy world of the classroom; she must seek out that serene space and engage in a conversation with self. The most necessary of conversations, it is the beginning of a lifestyle and a teaching style that will transform and revitalize. When I began to take the time to sit with my students and write and journal, I discovered aspects of myself which had been buried, neglected, and ignored for years. When I cultivated the art of listening to myself and seeking self through autobiography, I became a different person and a different teacher. Most importantly, I became a “listening” teacher--open to new and different viewpoints and new and different ways of thinking. Therefore, it is to autobiography that I turn for a guide in understanding the road “less traveled by” (Frost, 1993, p. 599)--the
road to process philosophy—which I have made my regular path of travel for the last few years.

**An Autobiographical Exploration**

My early years of education and the early years of my teaching career offer contradictory reflections of the post-war generation into which I was born and the turbulent “sixties” in which I grew up. Sheltered and studious, I was never inclined toward revolutionary activities. Born in the “Baby Boom” era, I was the first born child of a couple typical of many in that time period; and like many other “Baby Boomers,” I mirror the personalities of parents who had survived a chaotic period and who hoped for better things for their children:

My father who had served his country well on the Bataan Death March and as a POW of the Japanese during World War II introduced me, I think, to my bookish side. It is he whom I recall in my youth as the “teacher figure,” teaching me my alphabet and to write to “100” so I would be ready for first grade. And my mother, who is one of the most generous, caring persons I have ever met, was always there for support. School projects were family projects. As I think back, I realize that my younger sister and I were blessed with a peaceful, pleasant childhood, unaware at that time of the chaotic decades ahead for the country.

As I graduated from high school, the stormy “sixties” roared upon us. In the last half of the decade, I went to college with the flower children and watched as several of my schoolmates departed for Vietnam and never returned—and not once did I question, protest, or rebel. Because I was brought up in a very provincial environment, foreign ideas like challenging established and conservative viewpoints were quite out of my realm of understanding. As a beginning teacher, I never considered opposing the methods or ideas in the curriculum guide: I followed the standard lesson plan, adhered to the mechanized instructions from the central office, and attended the professional improvement seminars designed to improve my teaching techniques. I returned to school often and attempted to learn more that I might “teach more and teach better.” I’m certain now that the classes and conversations with other teachers made a difference; but for a while, I was relatively unchanged, still primarily a disseminator of facts. Although discussion was
lively and was at all times encouraged, the teacher voice was too dominant in my classroom; and the classroom was not as student-centered as it should have been.

The year was 1972—first year teacher with no years teaching experience—two years of graduate study—ready to teach the world. In nine months I could certainly impart to those thirsty young minds my love of literature and an appreciation for the beauty of those many lines of poetry that I had relished for the last two years. I would inspire in them that same love for the Victorian poets that Louisiana Tech's beloved Mr. Snyder had inspired in me and a myriad of other English graduate students.

I can still see him behind his podium—a true Southern gentleman, but with a touch of Tennyson and Rossetti and Fitzgerald—how he loved “In Memoriam,” “The Blessed Damozel,” and the “Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.” He had a manner of pointing the way to those profound truths and making them seem so meaningful that it was like the sun had just appeared from behind a cloud—a glaring, wide-awake truth. Why couldn't we have seen that?

That's what I could do with my five classes of senior English. They would every one revel in Wordsworth, Shakespeare, and Chaucer—everything they needed to know about English literature in nine months. And we would also cover the essentials of grammar and a research paper. After all, I had an entire school year. There would even be time for a few paperback books, works they needed to read to survive college and life.

Stop! No one told me in college or student teaching about the monthly report, progress reports, parish wide testing days, school pictures and ID's (always through the English classes), pep rallies, club day, Homecoming Preview, Homecoming decoration activities (I lost an entire week!), Thanksgiving Assembly, Christmas Assembly, senior meetings—did these kids ever stay in class? And to top it all off, this was the year of "The Ice Storm"! We had not had this happen in north Louisiana in decades; school was dismissed for four days in early January. I blinked my eyes, and it was May! Where did the year go?

I see some of their faces even now—more mature than I remember myself as a senior. They were much more excited about their senior year (I had forgotten that) than about senior English. And the new
teacher just a few years older than themselves could be great fun to test, especially by the boys. (Let's see if we can make her angry enough to send us to the office!) Not bad boys--just boys! Did I teach them anything that year to help them in their future? Oh, that I could do that year again!

Just as no one had prepared me that first year for the real-life days of school, so had no one prepared me for the (in)significance of the amount of material I would not cover. Concerned with teaching as many facts as I possibly could, I did not know the danger of those dead, "inert ideas" of which Whitehead (1929a) warned; I had not yet heard that I needed only to teach "few and important" and in "every combination possible" (p. 2). I made some mistakes that first year but not the ones I thought I had made.

The next year arrived sooner than I had expected; and the principal, who had been my principal in high school, called me in and asked me if I would be interested in sponsoring the cheerleaders. The girls needed someone young and energetic. He had asked me the same question the previous year when he called me and offered me the job; but I had declined then on the basis of the fact that, besides being a new teacher, I had a four month old baby. I declined again; but when my schedule for the upcoming year arrived in the mail, I found listed for sixth period class--not English IV--but Cheerleaders!

I think back to that surprise assignment. I was thoroughly confused and troubled. Could I really argue with him? He had called me and offered me a job. Well, it won't be that bad--I'll do it for a few years and then I'll give it up. But for now, it's "GO, TEAM!"

And it was "Go, Team!" for over a decade of my teaching career, days and nights filled with balancing the duties of the classroom teacher with the duties of a sponsor of extracurricular activities. I adjusted to the added responsibilities: ordering spirit ribbons, collecting ribbon money, painting signs, planning the pep rallies, bus trips, practice, ordering uniforms and camp clothes, competitions.

Looking back, I marvel at how I did that in addition to making out lesson plans, writing out tests, grading papers, and carrying on family activities. Extracurricular activities are an important part of the school experience, but from the perspective of the overworked teacher, they can be a nightmare. The lessons always got
planned, and the tests always got graded; but, today, from a distance, I question whether I was too immersed in the extracurricular? Did my students suffer during those years? And finally, were the values and character traits learned and developed during the after-school activities as important as the experiences in the classroom? I began to question my primary purpose as a teacher: who am I, what am I here for, and where am I going? Most importantly, am I going in the direction in which I need to be going?

The year was 1986—fifteen years into a teaching career—and I realized that it was time for me to get down to the business of teaching. I was devoting literally hundreds of hours a year to extracurricular activities in addition to grading tests, essays, and term papers; supervising student teachers; and taking classes to finish my Plus-30. I was as close as I ever came to suffering from “teacher burn-out,” a fact I hesitate to admit because I’m not sure there is such a condition. I think teachers who fail to seek growth and who constantly repeat the same lessons year after year with little or no change may “sizzle away,” but they do not burn out. There’s no fire. If there were fire, there would be energy, warmth, and passion to continually fuel the fire. But teachers can allow themselves to be overloaded, and I was beginning to feel the stress of years and years of extra “non-teacher” work. So, one day, for no immediately apparent reason, I became brave or audacious or (perhaps) a little bit dismayed with the strain; and I requested a change. It was, I decided, many years past time for someone else to take a turn with the megaphones and the poms.

Cheerleaders—they too are a part of my life as a teacher—I could write a book on them! I see so many faces from so many years—happy faces and hugs (You were great; I knew you could do it!), sad faces and grimaces (Why were you all in the field house when the team was there?)—we went through glad times and sad times. One summer we buried a young sophomore who was killed in a tragic auto accident—smart, pretty, always a smile. I was very close to those young ladies. I was “Mom,” “Mrs. H.,” “Miss Janis.”

Although it was a sad time in many ways, it was the right time. It was time for me to open some new doors and walk some unexplored paths. Though unaware of it at the moment, I was moving toward a way of thinking “that lets go, lets move and
change” (Levin, 1989, p. 29), which is surprising because “letting go” had always been difficult for me.

The change occurred gradually, and the change occurred quite naturally, which leads me to believe that my gravitation toward a process philosophy of education is the most natural one. If unchecked and allowed to grow, a process mode of thought springs forth on its own, I think; and although it may not be recognized at the time as process philosophy, it is there, and it is there to stay. As I realized I had become a different kind of teacher, I wondered what might have promoted the change. I reflected on the specific situations or certain individuals whose presence or influence might have promoted or fostered this move toward a different way of thinking. At that point, however, I had no answers for my queries; I knew only that I wanted to follow this new avenue of thinking.

The change I had been certain I was ready for came in late May of 1986 in the form of a request by the principal, an educator who had at one time been my high school civics teacher and with whom I had taught in the early years of my career. He asked me one afternoon if I would consider taking the English IV Advanced Placement classes. He would pay for the AP preparatory course at LSU if I could go down for three weeks that summer. Besides, he added, I would have “lots” of free time now that I was no longer responsible for the cheerleaders—this would be something I would really enjoy. He knew I would accept, and I did; and he was right. I was eager for a new assignment and accepted with great enthusiasm the challenge of returning to school and preparing to teach the Advanced Placement classes.

It was a glorious three week session in Allen Hall on the LSU campus. The professor was Dr. Herbert Rothschild: Harvard graduate, lover of literature, and a true student of the arts.

I remember one of the first statements he made to the class: “I would like to learn as much from you as I possibly can”—and as the first few days passed and I marveled at his brilliance, I smiled at that statement and pondered as to how in the world he planned to learn anything from six to eight high school teachers that he had not already learned many years ago.
It became apparent by the end of the course, however, what he had meant by his earlier statement because the class was not the customary literature course so familiar to most English teachers. The class was a sharing of perspectives and interpretations—he brought out the best in each of us—that’s one of the trademarks of a great teacher! His conduct of that brief summer seminar became the basis for my classes when I returned to school in the fall. And every year since that time, on one of those first days of school, when we’re getting the year started and while we’re getting to know each other, I never fail to tell my own students the very same thing Dr. Rothschild told us: “I’m the teacher, but I want to learn as much from you as you do from me!”

I made that statement to my classes for the first time in the fall of 1986; and I also began sitting in a circle with them, and I began listening to them—really listening. My classroom has never been the same! For me, it was a new beginning; I rediscovered teaching and reading and learning. I began to cultivate connections in every lesson, on every day, and in every student. Those classes that year were really special (as I say about every group). Until I lost all my possessions in a fire in 1997, I kept in my bookcase the end-of-the-year letter they composed, decorated, and framed for me, filled with every single error I had raved about through the year. It was a masterpiece of atrocious grammar and usage! They were so clever and gifted. I saved also in my files their personal aspirations which I had been instructed to keep until they returned for their reunion.

It has been over twelve years since that “new beginning.” I think, perhaps, it was a new beginning in ways other than the new course, my new attitude, and my new manner of conducting class; I think it was, in fact, the beginning of a major mind shift which would not make itself fully known for several years, but it was a beginning. Thinking back, I realize this was a major turning point in my career and my life. I see now that it marked my returning to the classroom in two ways: my high school classroom and the university classroom. It was also the point at which I turned once again to the possibility that it was not too late for me to return to serious
study. And the dream of doctoral study resurfaced from my past. A lover of books since childhood, I rediscovered the joy of learning.

Ironically, the beginning was also an ending. The 1986-87 school year was the last year in the complex that had been Ouachita since 1959, the year of the move from the grand old building of Georgian architecture downtown. The complex was in remarkably good shape for its age, needing only minor repair and refurbishing before it would be an excellent school plant for the middle school in the district. We were scheduled to move in June to the new 15-million dollar facility that had been funded through a parish bond issue. The new Ouachita High was a dream-come-true; we had moved into the 21st century ahead of schedule. But it was a sad good-bye to many memories too: I had spent four years as a student and fifteen years as a teacher in that old building, fifteen years in the same room where I had taken freshman English myself. I experienced a multitude of emotions; I also faced the cold hard truth I had to pack up or discard fifteen years of my life.

English teachers are collectors of paper--newspaper articles, test papers with especially good discussion questions, term papers so well done they just have to be saved, paperback books--paper and more paper. It took me one full week after the students were gone to clean out, discard, and sort my "stuff"; but I worked diligently. I arrived every morning around 9:00 and worked until 3:00 or 4:00 boxing up books and files to be transported to my new room. In retrospect, as I envision that teacher-past image of myself sorting and packing through that first week of summer, I confront also the fact that I overlooked at the time: those papers and books were most precious not for the printed words they held but for the connections they contained. At that time, however, I was not cognizant of the import of connections. That awaited me down the road a bit. During that time, late one afternoon, I discovered at the end of the hall some gorgeous old solid wood library bookcases, which I was determined, at first sight, to carry to my new room. English teachers will kill for bookcases; and besides that, I could take part of my past with me. I remember that afternoon vividly:
I set out on my mission. Finding my principal wandering on one of the upper halls, I plead my case. “You’re going to throw them away anyway. Wouldn’t they look great in my new room? You know how I am always needing more shelves—and, no, I don’t want new METAL shelves. These have character!” He groaned and grimaced, but I won that one—and I left, finally, with plans in place for my newly acquired treasure, ready to settle down in a new place.

The move to the new school was the ending of an era for me, but—another irony—the beginning of an era for my son, who would be a freshman during the upcoming year. He did, however, spend a few weeks at the old school that was so much a part of both his parents’ lives, reporting for weight training to the old field house because all the equipment was still located at the old school. I could see both the field house and the stadium from my classroom, and I remember watching him arrive to work out throughout the week I was doing all my cleaning out.

My mind returns to that bony, lanky kid who in four years never missed a workout or a practice. I can see him so clearly, dedicating himself completely to being the best that he could be. He did love the game of football! Little did I know at that time that we were all in for a glorious four years. Neither did I realize how difficult it was going to be to bid farewell to those four years.

During those first four years at the new school, I was busy teaching the AP classes, sponsoring the Shakespeare Competition, and supporting the school athletic program. It became customary for me to be one of the last ones to leave every day; many times I would go home and pick up Amy, and we would return to school together, she to play in my room, myself to grade papers or work on lessons. As I think back to those years, I am reminded of how fortunate both my children were in that they were never placed in a day-care facility. That was one worry I didn’t have because my grandparents, who had always played an important role in my life and who were in excellent health, devoted themselves to caring for both my children while I taught: they read to them, played with them, centered their days around them.

This is another vision indelibly etched on my mind—my own kids waiting in the afternoon to get picked up, sometimes playing outside when I drove up the driveway, both my grandparents sitting and watching—“How they loved my kids!” I suppose that’s the reason my children never seemed to mind that I drove off every morning.
(Why should they? They had it made!) It occurs to me now that most teacher-mothers require a great deal of support to make it. I was one of the lucky ones with both grandparents and parents nearby ready to help in a crisis.

Looking back from this vantage point, I am reminded also of Madeleine Grumet's observation on the passage between the teacher's world of school and the teacher's world at home. It's a daily passage and the transition is not always an easy one.

During those years school was as much a home as home was home. We all followed Trey to science fairs, baseball games, and football games. Both Charles and myself were extremely involved in the Booster Club and other parent activities; Amy, though involved in her own interests and activities, was an ardent supporter of big brother. When Trey was a junior, we went to the Superdome and won the 4-AAAA State Championship. We have said so many times that "we would love to DO that day and night again." During his senior year he was one of the two captains; and at every home game, I dreaded the next year when he wouldn't be the one going out to the middle of the field at the beginning of each game. I admired him, as well as his teammates, who came to be in four years like my own sons, for persevering through the pain and the injuries of such a difficult sport. It's tough keeping up your grades through practice and training, which at Ouachita is year round; and they grew from the experience. Football teaches many life skills, but it doesn't last forever; and as expected, that last season came to an end.

Letting go was a difficult task for me. I know you can't repeat the past; after all, isn't that a major topic of discussion whenever I teach Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*? I marvel now at the fact that I was unable to understand something so simple, especially in light of the many classroom conversations I participated in on that very topic. My reflections take me back to those conversations as vividly as if I were once again sitting with my students.

"Could that be one of Gatsby's flaws?" I ask, "his thinking that he can repeat the past?" Seated in a circle, we spend time in a critical
analysis of this character, this novel; we brainstorm the green light and the American Dream. "What is this book really about? Do you see yourself in any of these characters?" The things I am learning about life from these kids! This is what teaching is all about.

But it took me a while to learn, myself, the lesson I was teaching; and the entire family was "in on it" with me. I actually wanted to stop time and stay right there—it's unbelievable but true. Although it sounds like the typical "empty-nest" syndrome, it was, somehow, more complicated that that: the pain I went through as I struggled to let the past go was all tangled up in my personal and professional past, as well as the present and the future. I don't know whether it was easier or more difficult having my children in the same school where I taught.

My salvation after Trey's graduation was to plunge more diligently into Amy's activities; I also stayed busy with professional organizations like the Louisiana Council of Teachers of English. I started to do more than just attend. I began to submit proposals; I presented; I wrote. I served on several reviewing committees for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It was on one such committee, at the invitation of former Woodlawn principal Mr. J. W. Cook, retired but still dedicated to helping teachers and principals, that I happened to meet Kathryn Benson, English teacher and LSU doctoral student. As we visited, she shared with me her doctoral study experience; her enthusiasm was contagious. This, I realized, was what I wanted to do. So, I made plans to return to school, this time at Louisiana State University at Shreveport; and I began serious consideration of the Ph. D. program at LSU in Baton Rouge. During this early period, I began to experience the feelings of contradiction that would haunt me for quite a while: there was a pull toward doctoral study as I had always been the "student-type," but there was also the pull of the English classroom which I loved so much. I was in a quandary.

I think about those decision-making days, excited about the prospect of study and at the same time anxious about making such a huge career change in mid-life. "What must I be thinking? I'm happy here. I love my job. I will miss this school, these friends, these kids." I think also of what one of my friends and coworkers said to me one day after my graduation rehearsal talk to the seniors (I consider it one of...
the nicest compliments I have ever received.) She said, "I told Gary our principal) that you knew just how to talk to seniors—they listen to you—you really have a way of getting through to them." I guess I have a "senior mentality"!

And I suppose I always will, for many doctoral program hours later, I still miss my seniors; but I made the decision to take a chance on change. That summer I enrolled in a course at LSU-S; and although I didn't know it at the time, there would be no turning back. It was the summer of 1993.

Dr. Joe Green was my professor at LSU-S; and after a couple of classes with him, I was hooked. Fascinated with these new ideas and theories totally unlike my graduate study in English literature, I began to contemplate possibilities other than the high school classroom. Uppermost in my mind was the experience of twenty-two years in the classroom! Couldn't I share what I had learned about teaching and kids during that time? I thought back to those first few years of teaching that I wish I could do over again, and I decided that I could make a contribution either working with student teachers or teaching teachers. Perhaps I could assist a young teacher through those first years which are so difficult. Dr. Green was an enthusiastic supporter. I can hear him now:

"You can do it! You like to read and study, and you like to write. You're a natural!" He was the catalyst that really got this process on the road, and he provided me with a superb foundation. Many of the authors and ideas I encountered during that first fall semester I had at least a working knowledge of as a result of his very excellent introduction to doctoral study. Dr. Green is another dedicated educator who has had a major influence on my life.

I loved everything about the notion of doctoral study; like an avid reader at the beginning of a new book, I was enthralled. For another year I drove once a week to Shreveport, about two hundred miles round trip, to take doctoral level courses. I got home about 11:30 on the evening I had class, which made the next morning at school a bit difficult, but I didn't mind. Like the typical teacher, I expected late hours; and the study was exciting. Through Dr. Green, at a Philosophy of Education meeting where the class participated in a panel presentation, I met Dr. William Doll. At the meeting, I scheduled an appointment with Dr. Doll in Baton
Rouge regarding entering the doctoral program—taking a leave from my job and spending a year of residency in Baton Rouge completing course work. It was a major turning point in not only my career but also my life.

Before I made that final decision, however, we sat down as a family and discussed this new direction I was taking in my career. I asked for their opinions, and the decision was unanimous—“Do it!” Amy would be entering her sophomore year at Ouachita; and although she was already very involved in academic and extracurricular activities, I decided I would rather miss that year than her junior and senior years. I was never willing to put family ahead of my personal ambitions, in spite of the keen desire to return to school. I could be gone during the week for that one underclassman year, and Amy—Independent, competent, and as organized as her father and English teacher grandmother, who could always be counted on—could handle it. So I took control—boy, did I take control! At the end of that year, I made a decision that would cause a monumental “shake-up” in not only my life but also the life of each member of my family: I requested and was granted a sabbatical leave from the Ouachita school system for the 1994-1995 school year. So, I packed away my teacher things for a year, headed south, and found a decent efficiency apartment near campus. My dream of a year of study was upon me.

What a year! For two semesters I enjoyed the luxury of classes without the worry of papers of my own to grade, and it was, indeed, a luxury; for with a son still in college and a daughter in high school, taking a year off meant budgeting, which neither of my children do very well. I was determined to enjoy the atmosphere of academia, though, and worry about bills and budgets on the side. That fall semester I scheduled an ambitious fourteen hours: Curriculum Theory, Phenomenology, Post-modernism, the Doctoral Orientation Seminar, and a Directed Study with Dr. Doll—not an easy course load. I stayed very busy—in Peabody hall, in Middleton Library, or at my typewriter—school was my life during every waking minute of the week. Thinking back, I don’t know how I wrote all those papers without a computer. Well, Hemingway and Faulkner did it—why not I?—that’s what I would have said at the beginning of my study in 1994. Today, I would

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say, “Well, Zora Neale Hurston and Virginia Woolf and Hemingway and Faulkner did it—why not I?” I really was not aware at the time of the vast changes that were taking place in my thinking and in my actions. Thinking back on those days, I see that I was slowly moving toward a totally different mode of thinking.

I remember vividly the first class meeting of the first week of that first semester—the class was Curriculum Theory; the professor was William Pinar. I was so nervous. Would I be able to do this? Am I too old to return to school? What am I doing here? The class was a joy! Pinar was as eloquent as I had heard, and the class was a nice size. Unknowingly and quite ironically, I sat down that first night beside an individual who would, through the course of that year, become a dear friend and colleague. A lady near my age with similar apprehensions, she was, like myself at that time, searching for a change, some answers—for, I think, that elusive truth which sometimes leads us into unknown, exciting, but, often, frightening regions.

And we met again the next night in the Phenomenological Research class being taught by Dr. Mary Ellen Jacobs. It seemed we were destined to become friends, as would everyone in that class of fourteen—all women—an amazingly similar group, in backgrounds and aspirations. During that fall my new friend Judy Jones and I collaborated on a phenomenological research project. We entitled it Transition: Journeys to Self-Discovery; and it was, indeed, a phenomenal experience. We searched for the essence of our topic, and I think we found it. I learned more about myself through that project and that class than I had in a long time. The class was a weekly adventure into discovery—I looked at the syllabus one week and contemplated with sorrow the fact that the semester would soon be over. That’s what learning is about—hating to think the semester will come to an end!

My other really demanding class that semester was a Friday morning seminar—it was Post-modernism with William Doll, whose post-modern world made me very nervous and apprehensive. An English teacher steeped in the classics, I feared I had ventured onto a terrain where I would never find my way. A
constant worry that semester, in spite of the fact that I enjoyed the new perspectives, the new names, and the many works I needed to read, was that I was way off path—and I shared this with Dr. Doll, who from the very beginning was patient and understanding with this "new kid on the block"—repeatedly assuring me that I did not have to learn everything in one semester. "I think I belong over in Allen Hall with those 'English' people," I said; but he advised me once again to give it time.

So, I did; and Friday mornings became a little less ominous although I was still conscious of how little I knew about philosophy. "Let's talk about the Victorian poets or The Sun Also Rises or To the Lighthouse," I thought—and that's how I finally began to make the connections. When I related what we were talking about to a story or a novel or even a line from a poem, I was okay. I could make the connection if I looked through a lens that was a part of my usual vision—I practiced that in the classroom; why not on myself, the teacher? And when I realized that, I took another really giant step toward the ideas so much a part of process thought, a philosophy which I was still unaware of at that time. That would be another hurdle, another day; at the moment I had to survive the semester. And I did—a multitude of small papers, several really big projects, many many hours in the library—the semester flew by. It was December before I knew it, and half of my treasured year of study was gone.

The second semester was equally challenging and passed as quickly as the fall. It included another class with Pinar and a class on Derrida, which I resisted to the bitter end; but Dr. Doll insisted I needed to know Derrida. As is quite often the case, the major professor won; so under protest, I scheduled Derrida. And Dr. Doll was correct in his advice—I grew from the challenges of the class, which were many, primarily because Derrida himself is a challenge. Confusing and convoluted, Derrida sent me into a spin the first few weeks; I spent hours reading and rereading. What I didn't know at the time was that Derrida is a challenge for the experts, as well as the struggling novices. I think it was at some point during this semester when I finally began to relax and accept the fact I was not going to learn everything
in a couple of semesters. But I did need to know Derrida; and, in the end, I survived Derrida. The class presented yet another perspective from which to view my teaching. 

The spring semester offered opportunities for the practical side of university study as well. I accepted a graduate assistantship to work with Patti Exner supervising student teachers. Having worked through the years as a classroom supervisor, I looked forward to viewing the student teaching process from the college supervisor perspective; and Patti is a pro. I realized I could learn much from her experience and expertise. I also scheduled a qualitative research class with Dr. Earl Cheek that semester, which gave me a welcome opportunity to return to Ouachita periodically to complete a study on an at-risk student. It was good to get back into the real world of the high school classroom. In spite of the fact that I relished every moment on the LSU campus, I realized during my visits to Ouachita how much I also missed my classroom. Perhaps Thomas Wolfe was wrong; perhaps you can go home again. I was both glad and sad the day we moved me out of my little apartment and headed home. It would be quite a while before I headed back to Peabody Hall for one more extended stay.

I returned to Ouachita in the fall of 1995, invigorated by my year of study and eager to put into practice the ideas and theories I had encountered during my year of residency at LSU. My schedule was slightly changed from the previous years: instead of five sections of Advanced Placement English IV, I would only have four, and I would pick up a section of Creative Writing—which was great—I had always wanted to teach that course. So quite appropriately, I returned from a year of change to encounter more change; change was becoming a way of life for me. The year was a grand one. Of course, they all were in my particular situation; it was definitely not the real world. Once, when I told one of my English teacher friends in another parish about my schedule, she said, “I would kill for a schedule like that.” I was very fortunate, a thought I kept with me all the time. With college prep classes it was my privilege to greet every day young people eager to learn, willing to work (most of the time), and excited about preparing for their futures. “Why would I
want to leave a situation like this?” I asked myself. Well, for two more years I
wouldn’t have to think about that—I was going to teach until Amy graduated and
then return to complete my doctoral program. At least, those were the preliminary
plans.

During that fall, in addition to school and Amy’s activities, I represented
Ouachita High School on the Ouachita Parish Curriculum Content Guidelines
Committee, a committee which worked weekly from September to December of
that school year. It was during that semester that my involvement in educational
improvement on the state level really began. I completed an application for the
English Language Arts Content Standards Development Project, which was
scheduled to begin in January of 1996. My selection to that committee was the
beginning of many trips to the Louisiana State Department of Education in Baton
Rouge. It was both an honor and a big task; but I, once again, welcomed the
opportunity to embrace change.

The first meeting of the ELA Standards Development Committee was in
January 1996; and after the first day, when the committee of twenty-three teachers,
supervisors, and college representatives had managed to generate only one
statement toward what would evolve into the first standard, I wondered what in the
world I had gotten myself into. It was difficult enough to get two or three English
teachers to agree on a few words. Many of us wondered how such a diverse
group, from K-12, would ever be effective. But things improved, and the group
began to develop a common bond, common goals, and a method of effective
collaboration. By May we had produced the draft of the document that would
become Louisiana’s seven new English Language Arts Content Standards,
complete with benchmarks for every grade level: K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. We were
pleased with the final product. The standards were, in our opinion, an excellent
frame for what we wanted our students “to know and be able to do.”

I continued to serve on state department committees related to the
standards and assessment program being enacted as part of the legislature’s vast
reform plan. Uncomfortable amidst the bureaucracy, I nevertheless believed
strongly in the teacher voice, so I continued to serve. In December of 1998, I
co-presented the newly developed state standards to secondary teachers from
every parish in the state at a huge meeting in Alexandria. It was exciting to be a
part of such a massive project; and because the state was investing so much time
and money in a plan involving so many teachers, I felt good about the process.
The system, invariably labeled the "bad guys," seemed to be working seriously at
including the teachers and the teacher voice; and I appreciated that. I grew from the
process as well; one of the many benefits was networking with teachers from all
over the state who daily worried about the same problems I worried about and
who, like all teachers, needed to take the time out of a demanding work schedule to
connect with other teachers.

The time came for approval of the standards by the Board of Elementary
and Secondary Education. After a public review, an extensive professional
review, and a review by an external group from out of state, the day of reckoning
had finally arrived. I had never seriously considered the possibility that the
standards might not be approved, but I got a call one morning at school. It was
May, and I couldn't imagine what the department wanted at that time of year. The
state department people were very concerned about approval of the English
Language Arts Content Standards document by BESE; there were major
objections from a couple of board members. Would I be able to come down for a
day to attend the BESE meeting and defend the standards from a classroom
teacher's perspective? My principal, always supportive, approved; so I headed
south once again, which is how I happened to be at the BESE meeting (my first
ever) when the new standards were approved. There were some questions, and
there was a discussion of concerns regarding implementation; but in the end the
anticipated objections never materialized. BESE approved the document.

After that, the process moved from standards to assessment; and I
continued to represent my parish on numerous committees: the Assessment
Framework Development Committee, the English Language Arts Test Item
Review Committee, the Proficiency Levels Definition Development Committee
for the English Language Arts. "Who devises names for all these committees?" I wondered one day, weary from the tedious nature of reform; and I contemplated bailing out. But I didn't; and the main reason I didn't was because teachers need to be involved. There are too many who complain about what's going on, but they refuse to get involved when they are asked; they resist any assignment that carries them out of their school. Teachers need to get out of their rooms! It's sometimes chaotic but always exciting.

The two years after my year of residency passed as quickly as my year of study at LSU had passed. I continued to take a class a semester, working long distance on reading and writing. I also traveled to Monteagle, Tennessee, for two consecutive falls to attend the JCT Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom and Practice. The drive was a long one, and I had to make it alone; but the experiences were essential to me at the time. I was determined during those two years back in north Louisiana to maintain my connection to doctoral study. One of the most meaningful projects during those two years was a joint presentation in the fall of 1995 with fellow doctoral student Al Alcazar whom I had met in Dr. Doll's Post-modernism class the previous year. The project had a unique beginning--at the LSU/UNO Curriculum Camp during the semester after the fall class. Several of us at that conference had during the previous semester explored the post-modern terrain every Friday morning with Dr. Doll, but during those mornings there had been little talk of non-post-modern things.

As Al and several of us enjoyed dinner that evening, the talk moved from the scholarly presentations to friendly talk about family and work. It was a chance to learn more about these fellow sufferers with whom you spent so many classroom hours. I had in only a few months acquired a great respect for Al's wisdom and kindly demeanor. Finally, I thought--a chance to relax--an opportunity at last to visit without the scholarly tribulations of doctoral study. I remember that conversation well:

"Al," I said, "Have I ever told you that my father was on the Bataan Death March?" This was something I had been meaning to bring up for a long time, aware from class discussions of Al's Filipino heritage.
But post-modernism and Derrida always took precedence. I thought, considering his background, that Al might have an interest in my dad's World War II experience in the Philippines—and he did! I was not prepared for the stunned look I saw on Al's face, nor the reply spoken most solemnly, "My dad marched too!" I was, for an instant, speechless.

There we sat—two teachers from two different worlds with a very uncommon, striking connection: the Bataan Death March was a part of both our fathers' histories and, therefore, a part of our own as well. Connections again! What might we learn from each other? Was there a connection here with our own classrooms? And that's how the project evolved into the presentation in Monteagle the following fall. We entitled the paper "Walk Fifty: The Children of Two Bataan Death March Survivors Return and Remember." In the paper we wrote about our fathers and created meanings for ourselves through the reconnection with our pasts.

Preparation for the paper was a wonderful experience for me. Although I knew the basic facts, I had never really sat down with my dad, one on one, to talk about his experiences. I had encouraged both my children at different points in their school lives to complete a project in which they went and talked to their grandfather and then wrote and presented the story of his POW history, but I had never spent extended periods of time myself talking to him. I am so glad I did. Not only did I learn about him, but I also uncovered regions of my inner self that rested many layers below the surface of my outer self and my classroom self. As Al and I dialogued in preparation for the presentation, I became convinced that the connection with my father's past and the connection with Al's connections with his past were providing insights we might otherwise have never known. I am certain we accomplished our goal, which was to create meaning in our lives that would help us as we encouraged the young people in our classes to create meaning in theirs.7 This was yet another step for me toward the process philosophy I would soon encounter: connections from the past to the present to the future are essential. The reflection helped me to understand how important it is to pause and reflect and search for meaning in the past as well as the future.
The second JCT Conference in Monteagle was even more important than the first one, for it was at this conference that I presented my first major paper connecting Alfred North Whitehead's *The Aims of Education* to the classroom. A project which evolved from the class I scheduled during the fall of 1995, working independently while teaching in Monroe, the paper was the culmination of my thoughts on Whitehead's educational essays. English teacher that I am, I had never read Whitehead's essays but had been intrigued by a quote Dr. Doll shared with me one day as we were discussing Whitehead and how I should approach a long distance study of him. I still remember Dr. Doll's advice:

"You don't need to attempt *Process and Reality* on your own. It's incredibly difficult without class conversations and discussions," he said. I remember feeling extremely relieved, since I had already heard from my friends reading the work that it was demanding, to say the least. Everyone seemed confused and frustrated with this "process thinking," whatever in the world that was. I had purchased the book, but at that time had only leafed through the first few pages. It looked as bad as everyone said, so I didn't argue with Dr. Doll. I would read Whitehead's educational essays and let everyone else decipher his really deep philosophical notions.

I was fascinated from the beginning with the Whiteheadian phrase Dr. Doll shared with me that day: "few and important" and "in every combination possible." That sounded very much like some of my own thoughts about teaching; so I headed out of Peabody with a new assignment, looking forward to reading a philosopher-type who wrote so clearly about educational matters.

And that was the beginning of my excursion into process philosophy. I wrote the paper for the JCT Conference and was very pleased with the final product, as was Dr. Doll. I learned a great deal about Whitehead and myself and my classroom. After the presentation, Dr. Doll said the paper would be a nice beginning to a generals question, which made me positively ecstatic. This was a major step in my progress, I thought. It was also, although I didn't know it at the time, the final step into a field of study which would occupy me for years, possibly a lifetime. Of course, the next assignment, as I had anticipated all along, was *Process and Reality*: no one can truly understand Whitehead without knowing his
greatest work—the one that details the very complex philosophy known as
process philosophy. As I plunged into the monumental, very complicated book, I
wondered if I would ever be able to make any sense of the terms; they were
abstruse, technical—it was slow reading. But I had plenty of time: I was on my way
to becoming a Whiteheadian thinker. By the time I returned to complete my
doctoral study, I would have Whitehead under control I told myself.

Such were my days back in the real world: the classroom and my students
were a joy; the conferences and my own personal study were invigorating; and my
state department work was rewarding. This, in addition to encouraging a son
through the last semesters of college and supporting a daughter who had
undertaken numerous extracurricular activities, made for a busy two years. Like
Trey, Amy’s high school career was a glorious one. Once a year in February, we
flew with her squad and many other parents and supporters to the National
Cheerleader Competition in Orlando, Florida. During her freshman year they won
the national championship, and every other year they placed in the top five out of
hundreds of squads. It was an honor that came at a high price, in hours and injuries
and tears. I wouldn’t trade those fun-filled times or those valuable lessons learned
through perseverance and dedication to a goal, but I did question at times the
emphasis on competition in our schools today. My children had been fortunate;
but what about those who didn’t have the opportunity to take the dance lessons,
the gymnastics, and all the other requirements of a top-dollar program? Do we
sometimes get our priorities out of line in public schools today? The programs in
which my children participated also made me consider the extent our attitudes
about school are affected by the experiences we had during school in our own
lives.

Once again, the writing of Grumet came to my mind as I struggled with the
conflict between my personal life and my school life and what I believed to be
best for all students. When I stood my duty in the hall, I saw students I had never
seen before; and they were students I would never see in my AP classes. Many
of them would not make it to their senior year. They would drop out to go to work
or to get married or because, for some reason, the school was not meeting their needs. And that bothered me because I knew that for some students Ouachita was the only avenue to a better life. I believed in its potential to do good even as I recognized that it, like all schools, was not perfect and sometimes failed. But schools can't afford to fail; this I have come to believe during a quarter of a century. A part of my past and present, Ouachita had provided a haven, a happy place, a strong foundation for my family—and a bridge to the future. What could I do to assure it would provide for future generations of students in a similar fashion? Do we need changes? Rather, what do we need to change first?

Until I left, I never fully realized what a special place Ouachita is to me. I can't drive down I-20 headed to and returning from Baton Rouge without looking over to see if the lights are on; it's such a huge complex that it's impossible not to see the lights, even though the school is quite a distance off the Interstate. And those last two years I spent there were "especially special." The classes, the works studied, and the conversations those two years were somehow different from the classes, the works, and the conversations of prior years; or were they? Was it, perhaps, that they were seen through the eyes of a different teacher? The students were, for the most part, the same; perhaps I was different. As I look back, even the field trips I took those years were especially memorable—I relished every minute, I think, because I realized that when Amy graduated in May of 1997, I would, quite likely, be "graduating" with her. I had graduated myself from Ouachita many years ago; but after college and graduate school, I had returned. This time there would be no return.

As the end of the 1997 year approached, I realized I needed to make a decision about doctoral study: the preliminary plans had been for me to finish two more years at Ouachita and then return to finish the doctorate. I wanted to get back to the study; but with Amy entering LSU, it seemed rather selfish for me to take off another year when I really needed to work. For that reason I began to consider other avenues to get closer to LSU and at the same time find some sort of teaching position. At about the same time, I had the opportunity through a colleague to
interview with the principal at Denham Springs High School. My assistant principal friend had played ball with him at Northeast and spoke highly of him. He said, "He's one of the good guys." So I took a day of personal leave and headed south toward a decision and a school that would change my life forever.

Mr. Wax was as personable and professional as I had heard, and I felt right at home. He was going to need an English teacher, he said, and he offered me the job on the spot. He even promised me a couple of English IV classes, which I didn't expect, coming into a new situation. Although I knew that Denham High School was more conservative than the environment I was accustomed to, I left Denham that day feeling as if this anticipated move was exactly what I needed to do. I brought the report back to the family, and we discussed my teaching there during the week and returning every Friday to check on Dad. Looking back, I think I must have been really desperate to get back to doctoral study, Peabody Hall, and Middleton Library. What must have I been thinking?

But we agreed that this could work, so the decision was made—I requested and was granted a year of leave without pay from the Ouachita Parish School System. It is not common to approve leaves for teachers to work in other parishes, but I had many years of service in Ouachita Parish; and they left the door open for me to return after my year at Denham Springs. It was a very difficult last few days of May. Even more difficult was the packing up and moving out, for I was determined to take "my room" with me—what is it about place and its effect on the way you think, act, and feel?—I wanted my room at Denham to be filled with the same pictures, the same books, the same bookends. It had to be my room; it occurred to me then that my classroom was one of the most important places in my life.

It took a month to pack up everything in my room. Since I was teaching summer school that summer, I was not able to begin until about 1:00 every day. What a task! As I sorted and packed and stopped to reminisce over a treasured poem or object, I was reminded of the week I had spent ten years earlier at the old Ouachita. Only this time I had even more "teacher stuff" than before; I wondered
over and over why I could not get rid of old lesson plans, sample papers from students long gone, photographs, senior graduation cards, posters, magazine articles—and books, books, books. Always in mind, like the typical English teacher, was the idea that I just might be able to use that again or adapt it. Out of desperation, I discarded many many things; but there were still, as my task at last neared an end, what seemed like a veritable mountain of boxes (the final total was fifty-five), not to mention numerous assorted items like my teaching table, a gift from a dear friend; my stool, painted in school colors by a favorite student; framed art prints; pictures—and my bookcases.

The day of the move finally arrived. It was an emotion-filled day; for as I rummaged through the last couple of desk drawers and stashed away the last remnants spread about the room, I rummaged through my mind in much the same fashion. There had been such good days in this room, and I might not be coming back. Several people, working early to get their rooms ready for the first day of school, stopped by to visit and to wish me luck one more time; and I sought out a couple of special people that day for a final "good-bye"—this was what I had dreaded for weeks. More than once that day I questioned the decision I had made, although it was much too late to even think of turning back. I remember trying to be positive: "Stay hopeful," I said. "Think of the green light glowing at the end of Daisy's dock—don't give up—isn't that what you tell your students? Take your own advice!" But this was home. This was the room in which both my children had studied, not to mention hundreds of other beloved students. This was the room I had selected myself just prior to our big move; and, suddenly, I was not sure at all that I was ready to leave it. I wonder now, in retrospect, just when exactly I made that first step toward such a vast change in my life and my teaching. On that day I am certain I was not aware of the enormity of the decision I had made or the steps I was about to take.

Charles and Trey arrived in the late afternoon to load everything into the U-Haul truck. Although I had told them I had a room full of boxes, I could tell by the looks on both their faces that they were not fully prepared for the task ahead of
them. From this perspective, nearly two years later, I ask myself once again, "Why did I have to take everything? Why didn't I just box some of it away and store it in the departmental center as I had during my year of sabbatical and residency at LSU? Why? Why?"

The most prominent—and the most painful—memory is the image that haunts me to this day. In fact, as I record it here in print, I feel ill; and I wonder at the power of a mental picture's capacity to bring on such a keen physical sensation—but it does; it actually makes me sick! The picture I hold in my mind is of Trey and Charles as they struggled—and they nearly lost the struggle a couple of times—with those huge bookcases I had found discarded years ago at the old school. They were one of my most beloved objects in that room, occupying the corner where my desk sat. Six feet tall, about five feet across, and solid wood, they were as unmanageable from their shape as from their weight. Both of these guys worked out with weights, and it was difficult for them to move the shelves only a few feet. Several times I told them, "Let's just leave them. The teacher in here will love to have them." But both of them knew how much those bookcases meant to me, and they were more determined, I think, than I was that the bookcases were going with me. Once, on the stairway, I thought they had lost them for sure. I just knew with each step that shelves and men both were about to go tumbling. It was a frightening few minutes. I can still see Trey's muscles rippling as he fought what he surely must have considered a "monster" of a bookcase. But brute strength won that battle, and the bookcases were loaded on.

The loading of boxes and smaller objects was not as difficult; but by the time we had finished, darkness had fallen. And although I tried to fight it, the darkness had fallen over me as well; for I realized that all these books and memories, and their owner, would probably not be headed back this way any time soon. What I didn't know at the time was that the darkness would follow me, out of the parking lot and all the way to Denham Springs High School. It just wouldn't make itself known until the first day of October.

And that was the end of the beginning of the "move"—I was on my way to a new school and a new room. We pulled out early the next morning, eager to get the four-hour road trip from Monroe to Denham Springs and the unloading of a twenty-five year career accomplished. It was a bright summer day, and the gloom of the previous night seemed a distant memory. I was certain the worst part, the departure, was behind me; and I was partially correct, for the trip passed quickly.
and the unloading was a much simpler task than the loading. Since Denham High is
a single-story complex of separate buildings and my room in the English building
was adjacent to the main entry, the mountain of boxes, the smaller items, and the
monster bookcases were deposited about the classroom in only a couple of hours.
The big job now would be unloading the hundreds of books and files it had taken
me days to box up; but I still had a week before the first day of school, so I could
work at that task at a leisurely pace.

I spent most of several days unpacking and getting my room and myself
ready for the first day of school in my “new home,” visiting off and on with teachers
as they stopped by to welcome me to the English department. The room was
very different from my old room, even with all my personal belongings in place;
but I thought it would begin to feel more like my room in a few weeks. And it did; I
felt more and more at home with each passing day. The faculty was friendly and
helpful although I took quite a bit of teasing about all the boxes I brought. My new
principal said he had never had a teacher move into a room with a U-Haul truck.
Ironically, just when it was beginning to feel like my room, I lost it.

My phone rang early on the morning of October 1. In my mind I can still see
the time illuminated on the digital clock which stood on the nightstand beside the
bed--it was 4:47 a.m.--the image of those numerals, glowing green in the dark, is
vivid in my mind even today. One of those haunting, recorded-forever images, the
memory is evidence, I think, of the brain’s ability to record powerful images that
overshadow all other memories of certain unforgettable days. I don’t remember
every detail of that day, but I do remember the time and the ringing of the phone.
The phone only rang once, though, for the worries of a mother far away from home
trigger consciousness, or semi-consciousness, in an instant; and as I answered
quickly, my mind conjured up, even in a semi-awake state, all sorts of fears of
emergencies back home. The voice, however, was not a voice from home; it was,
instead, the voice of Dawn Pope, the assistant principal in charge of curriculum at
Denhan High School, with news of a different kind of catastrophe. The
conversation, though brief, was one I will never forget:
“Janis, I'm sorry to bother you at this time of the morning, but I need to tell you there's been another fire.” Another fire—I was shocked—two fires in one week—who would do such a thing? I was not completely awake yet, but I was conscious enough to be shocked. I remember saying, "On no! Is it bad?” And I remember also beginning to awaken enough to wonder why, among the hundred or so faculty members, I was getting such an early morning call; puzzled and groggy, I was still half asleep until she said, “It's the English building this time--your wing--your room was one of the ones damaged.” That response woke me fully. “How bad is it?” I asked. Although I was not at that time completely awake, I can hear Dawn's answer now as clearly as if it were that morning: “It's extensive, Janis. We wanted to tell you before you heard it on the news.” Extensive—I heard the answer; I knew the meaning of the word; but I was still not fully prepared for the reality of extensive or the extent of the destruction I found when I arrived at school a little while later.

Mr. Wax and Dawn were there outside the remains of my room when I reached campus that morning, realizing, I am sure, that even though I had been warned, I would still be shocked; and I was. From this distance, many months later, I don't know what I would have done without those caring arms and warm hearts.

Retracing in my memory the steps and feelings of those first few minutes, I see now that the feelings went beyond shock and moved more into the realm of horror. Ever the optimist, and applying my own personal interpretation to Dawn's attempt to prepare me, I had expected to be able to salvage a great many things. I was in no way prepared for the almost total destruction I found: the walls were still standing, but nearly all the roof was gone; and inside—that was the most difficult sight to accept—inside was devastation, rubble. All that remained of my twenty-five years of teaching was rubble—stacks of burnt wood, ceiling tiles, charred books, and papers.

The most heartbreaking sight of all was the comer nearest the window where my guys a month and a half earlier had placed the old library bookcases—there was little left! All that remained of my beloved shelves were charred remnants, blackened and falling down except for the lower shelves, a couple of them still lined with books burned beyond recognition. I thought I was going to be physically ill. In a true state of shock for a few hours, I struggled to maintain a seemingly stable composure, but, within, I wondered how I was ever going to make it through this
catastrophe. Mostly, I wondered why in the world I ever thought I had to bring everything with me, the feeling, I think, which began my movement out of the initial stage of shock and into the next stage.

Stage two was the questioning. Why do catastrophic things happen? Why me? This was the destruction of a huge part of my life: my books--folders with newspaper and magazine articles--pictures of former students--pictures of family--my framed Monet prints--my Carpe Diem poster--a grandfather's old set of Encyclopaedia Britannica--things only an English teacher would treasure--all gone! "Why," I questioned, "Why did I have to lose everything I had collected and loved for a quarter of a century? These were my memories. Twenty-five years of my professional past were gone in a heartbeat." It was like a death. I sobbed for all the memories. Even though I told myself they were just "things," I still mourned their loss; they were my "things," and I wanted them back. At some point in this excursion through self-pity, I made a connection; and I paused, startled, at the similarity between thoughts I was thinking and statements repeated for years during classroom discussions. Wasn't this very similar to some of the feelings we always concluded were emotions Macduff felt in Act IV of Macbeth? Looking back, I see there was a salient connection there for both the teacher and the student; but I was unable to appreciate it fully at that time.

I remember also, at some point, realizing that I now fully and completely understood the stories of those who had suffered through a fire; I understood now why those families on the evening news walked around in the rubble, poking under stacks of debris. Because I had never been there, I had sat and watched and pitied; but I had never really comprehended the emotions that impel someone to dig around in ashes. But I've been there now; now I have experienced the emotions. In Harper Lee's classic novel To Kill a Mockingbird, Atticus tells Scout that you can't understand what others are feeling until you've stood in their shoes "and walk[ed] around in them" (1960, p. 282). I love those lines, such wisdom; I always direct students to them for a response, a conversation. I thought I understood what Atticus was saying, and I think I did to a point; but after the fire I
I understand much better. And from a distance of many months, I see I need to apply this. At that point, however, I was too close. I was too wrapped up in misery and pain.

For three days my chief mission in life was to salvage a few items from my past, to rescue a couple of memories. Hoping to uncover things the flames and the water spared, I sat for hours digging in ashes; I thought I would never be able to get the awful smell of fire and ashes out of my clothes and my mind. And I did have a little luck; I found a few "treasures"—a greatly cherished literary history book rebound by my dad because I loved it so, bookends from a special student teacher, photographs from the previous year's field trip to Natchez, a magazine with an article on Hemingway (untouched at all by the flames because it had been tucked tightly in a folder that was packed between some other folders—fire is a strange foe!). On the first afternoon, I was ecstatic; that was the afternoon I found the rebound book, charred but in one piece. With every object I found, I rejoiced as if I had discovered a lump of gold or silver. And the next day, miraculously, there surfaced from one of the piles of trash an only slightly charred newspaper I had saved for years, with the handwritten note from LSU basketball player Don Redden—#44: "To the best English teacher a 'jock' could ever have." I was elated; Don was one of those extraordinary young athletes who pass through once in a lifetime and who, like the young man in Housman's poem "To an Athlete Dying Young," had to take "the road all runners come" and be brought "home" (1965, p. 911) at too early an age. The notes from students and parents were among my most treasured "finds," but I didn't find as many as I had hoped.

For a couple of days, I was obsessed with my search; I wanted desperately to find Amy's journals from the year before, as well as some other pictures and gifts that were particularly special. Those items I never found, though, in spite of the fact that I looked for them over and over in exactly the pile of trash I had determined they should be in. It became an exercise in compulsion. Every evening I carried the objects uncovered that day back to the apartment and spread them out on newspapers. Although most of the items were absolutely worthless
because of the damage, I salvaged three boxes of "stuff" from my past. As the third afternoon in the ashes ended, I began to consider the possibility that I had probably found just about everything I was going to find. Looking back, I realize I must have been a pitiful sight, sitting among mounds of ashes every afternoon. People would stop and chat and express their sadness at my loss after moving so many things so far, only to have them destroyed. They were all so kind, and I tried to be friendly and optimistic; but deep inside, I was empty. It was becoming quite a morbid existence. Finally, one afternoon, one of my new friends, who had also lost nearly everything, gave me some advice I knew I needed to heed: "Let it go," he said. "There's nothing else worth anything in there." And I knew he was right, so I took his advice; that was my last day of plundering. But the end of that stage brought me face to face with the task I don't do very well--I had to let go of my past.

During the catastrophe, the students, many of whom had also lost treasured items, were wonderful; they all knew how many personal possessions I had lost. We all cried together the first day back, but we also dedicated ourselves to the objective I posted on the door of our borrowed room that first day back: "Goal for the day--students will assist teacher in making new memories," which they did. The journal entries that day were some of the most genuine responses I have ever read; they gave new meaning to the "real-life connection" objective. I decided, needless to say, to adjust the lesson. Instead of Beowulf, we talked about material objects and loss and what's important in life. I think that first day back was what my methods teacher referred to as a "teachable moment."

It was a time of sadness, but it was also a time of growth. Every day students would show up with books and flowers, or many times just a note handed to me after class. One remarkable trait of young people is that just when you think they're never going to grow up, they surprise you with an insight and an understanding you never expect to find. The community, as well, responded with donations of books and supplies; and, of course, my family and friends, as always, came through. My sister Gayle and niece Addie showed up one afternoon with
assorted gifts and a huge marker board for my new room. I was moved by the compassion of so many people who wanted to give "something" to replace the lost "things." I was encouraged and hopeful; and when the Ouachita faculty and students, led by longtime friend Pollye Tillman, called me home to present me with books, cards, and a totally unexpected, and entirely too extravagant, sum to replace some of my belongings, I was overwhelmed. But the gift from Amy remains the most treasured one—the one that brought immediate and profuse tears—a hard bound copy of my favorite novel The Great Gatsby, inscribed with the following note:

Momma, I thought this would be a wonderful gift to get for you to lift your spirits back up. Remember, think green! And that means hope! There is hope in everything. And you of all people can make bad into good. Forget about the past because it's over and you can't do anything about it. Therefore, focus on the days ahead and make them the best they can be. There's bound to be some good from all that's happened. Everything happens for a reason, and that's all you can think about now. So enjoy Tom, Daisy, and Gatsby and THINK GREEN, especially now! I love you! Amy

At the same time the inscription carried me into the past and to prior class conversations, it brought me, as well, firmly back into the real world. When the instructions you have always given are thrown back at you, there's little to do but follow your own advice. I guess she was listening in class after all.

The first few weeks after the fire were some long, difficult weeks, filled with the problems of a temporary room, the move to a temporary building, finding books for those students whose lockers were destroyed—new problems every day—some large, some small. It's a tribute to both students and teachers that a school of eighteen hundred students can continue to run smoothly minus eight classrooms and several restrooms and the entire administrative building completely destroyed. And through it all, we wondered what in the world could have made a seventeen year old student inflict over two million dollars worth of damage, not to mention the heartache and adversity, on his school, teachers, friends, and family? What a waste of property and time.
But we survived; and we all learned some valuable lessons, extremely
costly but valuable nevertheless. And as I sit here now, recording this finally in
print, I cry once again—not for the things I lost—but for those teachers and students
who had to endure such a sad time. Whereas many of the teachers and students
were angry and filled with strong, hostile emotions against the person who had
committed this atrocious deed, I was completely emotionless. I wished many
times that I could get angry, but I couldn’t; and strangely enough, I never have. The
feeling I experienced after the catastrophe was never of anger, but always of loss;
it was the feeling of a vast emptiness, a huge void. The utter senselessness
appalled me.

After the shock of the first two weeks subsided, I realized suddenly that I
had lost just about everything: reality reared its very realistic face, and it scared me
and depressed me. Like a child I longed for my bookshelves and my teaching
table, and not a day passed that I didn’t need a book or remember an article or a
folder or another textbook. I was haunted by my most prominent dysfunctional
teacher trait: I have never been able to teach with only one textbook—I have to
have three or four spread out in front of me—so after a couple of weeks without all
my “stuff,” I began to feel the full effect of the loss. In addition, I realized one day
that I was only going through the motions of teaching. I was pretending to be
excited about the lesson, and I wasn’t excited. I was losing all the zest that I
believed to be so important in a teacher and a lesson. The notion that I needed to
get out of the classroom for a while began to take shape; in fact, I decided it might
be the only way I would ever be able to save myself from complete and utter
“burn-out.” Knowing it would be impossible for me to continue for the entire year, I
went to Mr. Wax one afternoon and told him I needed to resign in January. It was a
very difficult task, but he understood. With an English teacher wife, he understood
my feelings more than some principals would have. So in January, I bade farewell
to some of the best and kindest friends a teacher could ever gather in half a year’s
time.
Problems continued to follow me: my home in Monroe flooded from a broken line in the wash room; my apartment in Baton Rouge flooded from a faulty washing machine; an East Baton Rouge Parish deputy without insurance ran into me on his way to work. If the catastrophes had not been happening to me, I wouldn't have thought it possible that so many troubles, mostly in the form of fire and water, could occur in the life of one individual. After the fire on our airplane during Christmas vacation, I felt I was ready for anything. I contemplated during that time the belief I had always had that all things happen for a reason; I just didn't know why everything had to happen to me during the same four months of my life. But I survived; and as many of my friends told me, I did come out of the year a much stronger person. Ever the optimist, I was certain the new year would bring better things.

During the spring of 1998, I went home to recover from the fire, to take care of my family, and to work on my generals questions. It was not a happy period. During this time I considered the possibility of returning to Ouachita for another year, but I was not sure if I was ready to return to the classroom. It was ironic that during all those years I taught, declaring burn-out would never happen to me, that I thought only of the professional and emotional burn-out; and when it did happen, it was both physical and emotional. It was during that spring semester that I also began to consider the possibility of applying for a graduate assistantship at LSU in the fall. I had always wanted to spend another year on campus; maybe this was the time to return to doctoral study on a full-time basis.

It was during this semester that I got a call from Dr. Doll about a Whitehead conference in California; he thought it would be a valuable experience and suggested I look into it, which I did. At first I was hesitant about the conference because of cost and distance, not to mention the enormity of the gathering. This was an international conference, vast in scope and participants; and I questioned whether or not I was ready for such a venture. However, after talking a couple of times by phone with Malcolm Evans, one of Dr. Doll's colleagues and a process educator through and through, I was convinced that I could, indeed, play a
productive role in a working group of the Association for Process Philosophy of Education. I made tentative plans to attend. With Malcolm Evans' encouragement, I wrote a brief article for the APPE Newsletter and began to adapt my Whitehead generals question for the APPE Journal. I established communication with the working group by email.

Just when I thought my state department work was slowing down, I received a very promising job possibility. As a result of my extensive involvement with the new English Language Arts Content Standards, as well as my study in curriculum and instruction, I was recommended by one of my state department friends for a consulting job in Region 4, the south central section of Louisiana. Since I was not teaching and had the necessary experience, I was intrigued by the offer; the job would be acting as Curriculum Consultant to a committee of English teachers from six parishes in that region. When I met with them, I was impressed and immediately agreed. This would be a difficult job, but it was doing exactly what I loved to do—work with and connect with other English teachers.

The task was an awesome responsibility; the work was tedious; and each day was challenging. However, it was, without a doubt, one of the most exciting, rewarding projects of my career, an experience I would not trade for anything. A group of dedicated, very knowledgeable professionals, the committee was a diverse but dynamic group. One observer who visited one morning called them a veritable “think tank”—they were an inspiration to me, just what I needed to combat the gloom and despair I was still feeling about my classroom, my teaching, and my study. As we worked and progressed through the three-week period, it was readily apparent that the period was a monumental growth experience for all involved. If every teacher had the opportunity to work with other zestful, invigorated teachers like that particular group, we could quickly solve some of the problems in our schools today.

The committee worked three weeks in June, five days a week from 8:30 to 3:00, at Northside High School in Lafayette. The primary task was the
development of grade-level performance indicators for each benchmark in the English Language Arts Content Standards; a secondary goal, if time allowed, was to develop sample activities for the standards and benchmarks as well. Of major concern to everyone involved, from the very first meeting, was to produce a document which would be “teacher-friendly” -- this was an overriding goal that guided the committee. They attempted throughout the process to develop a set of guidelines that teachers would find useful, providing enough prescription to guide and, at the same time, allowing for individual teacher creativity. And this they did; their supervisors and the regional director of the service center were very pleased and most impressed with all aspects of the document. What that group of teachers accomplished in three short weeks is a testament not only to their knowledge and expertise but also to their dedication to their self-assigned task "to create a document which would help, not hinder, their coteachers."

We were all sorry to say our “good-byes” on the last day. Gathered at Catahoula’s in Grand Coteau on that final Friday, the committee was greatly changed from the group that had met on the first day. Everyone was exhausted but proud of their effort and final product--ready for a summer respite, at last, and at the same time hesitant to say farewell to what had been an invigorating growth period. The group had bonded during the course of the three weeks; each had come to know and accept every other member. From my perspective, it was a remarkable study in group dynamics, the process of arriving at consensus, and professionalism. I left that day a changed teacher.

The last step in the development of this document was a final proofing and editing, which was one of my primary responsibilities. After the final editing, each parish began inservice and implementation of the document on the parish level. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in this part of the process as well. Four of the parishes asked me to conduct inservices on the document, as well as the overall standards and assessment process. It was impossible for me to refuse. As is frequently the case, the presenter came away with more than the participants. I was pleased to have teachers tell me at the end of the day that they
were leaving feeling as if this had been a useful day; I was positively jubilant to have several say they appreciated the “teacher perspective”—that had been my goal—to speak with a teacher voice, possibly because that is my true voice—my authentic voice. I didn’t know that then, but I think now that’s the truth (possibly with a capital T).

I moved throughout the spring and summer of 1998 toward the reality that I was rapidly becoming very Whiteheadian. I had used Whitehead’s thinking in a couple of sessions with the Region 4 group; some of them, very much the English teacher types, had never heard of Whitehead and wondered, I am sure, why I was wasting time even mentioning him. Quotes from Whitehead’s *The Aims of Education* were written on the board in the room where we worked. Because I was responsible for writing the “Introduction” and “How to Use This Guide” sections of the document, there is also Whitehead’s famous “few and important” quote in the document itself. I’m certain many English teachers in the six parishes of Region 4 wonder how a quote from Alfred North Whitehead landed in the Region 4 Curriculum Guidelines. It formed the basis of much of what we said and did those days, however, so I took advantage of the opportunity to “spread the word”—we need “to teach a little and teach it well.” This is, I realized, very much a basis of who I am and what I believe. Unknowing to myself at the time, it was also a theme I would hear echoed by David Ray Griffin (1998) in the first evening’s opening speech at the California convention in August: we must make Whitehead known and intelligible to the world.

The summer was a quick one; and before I knew it, it was time to board the plane to California and the Silver Anniversary International Whitehead Conference in Claremont. Amazed that I, an ordinary English teacher, was really on my way to participate in an international philosophical conference, I was also excited that Charles was going to join me mid-week to keep me company and make a holiday out of the trip as well. Unable to make the trips to Monteagle with me, he had arranged his schedule to participate in this “process” experience with me. Non-Whiteheadian but one of my pillars of support, he even attended a lecture.
one evening. It was a glorious six days; in fact, it's difficult to describe the experience without being effusive and speaking only in superlatives: it was wonderful, magnificent, grand!

I realize now that it was process philosophy that lured me to California and Claremont and process thinkers from all corners of the world—from philosophers to theologians to ecologists to classroom teachers—all with one common interest: Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy of process and how it can be used for the common good. From the first day, I was captivated—entranced—and as I immersed myself in the conversation and the connections, I realized I was experiencing the wonder of the first stage of Whitehead's rhythm of education—the stage of romance. I was right back to square one, over two years ago, when Dr. Doll pointed me to the now very familiar lines from The Aims of Education (1929a):

"Let the main ideas which are introduced into a child's education be few and important, and let them be thrown into every combination possible" (p. 2). Like a child two days before Christmas, anticipating great and glorious treasures, I walked around in a daze. Was it the beauty and serenity of the Claremont campus, was it just the hot California sun affecting my thinking, or was it the camaraderie and connections with others who had read and studied Whitehead (some for decades)? And always at the back of my mind, "How do we get students to experience a similar wonder—how do we add romance to a short story, a history lesson, or a chemistry experiment?"

The conference program was enormous, providing opportunities to participate in both formal presentations and structured conversations. In the Process Education group we shared thoughts about the possibilities a process approach offers teachers; we listened to life histories, which in many cases were very much like our own; and in some cases we disagreed. It was comforting to find genuine philosophers who were not exactly sure what Whitehead meant about some things. It was invigorating to share new perspectives on old passages; and as the frequently read passages came alive again with new meaning, the new friends quickly became old friends. The week passed too quickly! I left Claremont
a bid sad and a bit reluctantly but with a new zest for my tired, old philosopher—I felt "alive," as Maxine Greene (1995) phrases it—"awake" (p. 43). And once again, as we boarded the plane, I wondered, "So how do we, in a similar manner, bring new life into the classrooms and into the lives of the kids?

Since that time, I have often thought of the lectures. There were so many presentations I wanted to hear during each session it was difficult to make a choice. Prominent in my memory is Mary Elizabeth Moore's address (1998) and the impact it made on me at that moment. The story she told was a moving one, but her peaceful demeanor, caring attitude, and deep spirituality were as much a statement as the powerful message. Even more valuable than the lectures and the conversations were the friends—the connections! During that short week, I made friends I will keep for life. One lady, in particular, with a background and career amazingly parallel to mine, has become a regular email buddy. From Canada to Louisiana, we share, commiserate, and support each other. What I would have missed if I had neglected that California opportunity, for it was yet another step toward maturity as a process thinker.

I brought Whitehead home with me; and as I jumped into three days of inservices on the new standards in three south Louisiana parishes, I recalled the discussions in California on education reform. Many process philosophers are bothered greatly by the contradictions they see between the standards movement and process thinking. This was an issue I knew I would face again, philosophically and theoretically. I even used some of Whitehead's words in my presentation, uncertain as to whether or not the great thinker was, perhaps, turning over in his grave. Nevertheless, I utilized those thoughts from his educational writings, and the response was a positive one. There are a great many teachers who think in a Whiteheadian manner who have never read Whitehead; they apply throughout the course of their school days many ideas he proposes, and they've never seen either The Aims of Education or Process and Reality. So how does one become a process thinker without studying process philosophy? Is there a lesson here for teachers and teachers of teachers? As I finished up the workshops and headed...

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toward LSU, I stored all those questions away for another day. This was an issue I knew I would need to do some serious thinking about at some point in the future.

The fall of 1998 was an eventful and productive time—a course to teach, an introduction to Gadamer on Friday mornings with Dr. Doll and friends, two very compatible English-type office mates, and working in the Teacher Education Office with Dr. Flo Durway—all important facets in my development. However, the encounter with Dr. Durway at exactly that point in my progress (and I suppose I shall always be indebted to Dr. Cheek for his insightful placement of me under her tutelage) was one of the most important—and fortuitous—happenings in my tenure in Peabody. A rare combination of English teacher-teacher of teachers-curriculum theorist, I realized after only a little while that this was a great lady. Here was someone, like myself, who had spent over a quarter of a century in the high school English classroom—and still missed those days. Here was someone who possessed experience in teacher education—I have learned so much from her by just observing. Most importantly, however, here was the English teacher connection—someone who understood the joy of sitting with students and listening and learning—someone who relished a book or a story or a poem and the connections they held. I shall always recall the conversation one afternoon about how wonderful it was to mention casually in the course of a conversation a reference to Milton’s *Areopagitica* and expect instant understanding. Only an English teacher would appreciate that! So the fall of 1998 brought yet another great educator into my life; and as I added Dr. Durway to my doctoral committee, I added two much needed dimensions—the English teacher and the feminine perspectives. My committee was, at last, not quite so patriarchal.

The highlight of the semester was the defense of my generals, an experience that was absolutely the most rewarding, invigorating one of my doctoral career. It was, I think, what a final exam should be—a scholarly discussion, a culmination of many courses, many papers, many hours of poring over old notes and textbooks—an “experience” in learning. Sitting in Peabody with the individuals who had been most influential in my progress, I appreciated, more than ever, all
those who through the years, had played a role in this drama. I appreciated, as well, the depth of understanding an autobiographical exploration, had provided me. Pinar’s words from my earlier study, “One returns to the past, to capture it as it was, and as it hovers over the present” (1994b) had taken on new and greater meanings. And, as always, it was back to the classroom for me and the question which is ever a part of my teacher thinking: what can I do to make the classroom as exciting as my adventure in learning? This is the question I expect an intense study of Whitehead to uncover; for as I end one stage of my “process,” I see not the end but simply another beginning. That’s the ultimate principle in Whiteheadian philosophy: the fundamental nature of the universe is process--process is reality.

End Notes

4. Madeleine Grumet addresses in Bitter Milk (1988a) the tensions experienced by women who must constantly balance two worlds. In a passage that could have been written by any teacher-mother, she records, “If I am a teacher, I rise early. It may still be dark. I check to see if my children are up. I made their lunches last night. My eldest can’t find her shoes. My youngest worries that I will forget to sign her permission slip for the field trip. I worry that I will dash out of the house and leave the stencil that I need for my second-period in the typewriter” . . . (p. 79). Mothers leave the private world physically, but it remains with them throughout their journey through the public world of teaching, just as the public world invades the private.

5. I was privileged to spend a day in workshop (Loyola in New Orleans) with Maxine Greene, who, like myself, finds great meaning in Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby. Her work Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change (1995) is a brilliant contemporary perspective on the critical role imagination must play in the classroom. Believing classrooms should be both nurturing and thoughtful, she describes, as well, a concept very Whiteheadian—the “pulse” of experience, asserting that they “ought [also] to pulsate with multiple conceptions of what it is to be human and alive” (p. 43).

6. After reading Derrida’s Specters of Marx (1994), I returned many times to revisit his perspectives of time “out of joint” (p. 22), what it means “to learn to live” (p. xvii), and the possibilities offered by “haunting obsessions” (p. 37). I see in Derrida the Whiteheadian quest for seeking always another level of meaning; and although Derrida would very likely not phrase it in Whiteheadian terms, I think the possibility exists for a meaningful connection.

7. Gregory Bateson’s work Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity (1979), which I “connected” to this project, provided me with a useful foundation to begin thinking about the possibilities offered by connections, as well as the classroom that emphasizes the “living-ness” of children. Like Bateson I ask, “Why do schools
teach almost nothing of the pattern which connects? [Why do] they dare not teach anything of real-life importance?" (p. 8).

8. The teachers, struggling with change and state reform, identified strongly with William Pinar's quote I shared with them: "The pressure upon us is enormous. Students, teachers, administrators, and education professors have all been called to work even harder, to achieve even more... In the nearly 25 years I have observed and studied the schools, never have I seen so many teachers defeated. Not that teachers mope, mind you! A few still wear smiles, although they appear to be cynical smiles of defiance rather than those of pleasure and satisfaction... In general, then, it is a somewhat grim situation in which current reforms are under way. Even so, one finds hope; in specific individuals and in specific places one observes occasional excitement..." (1994a, pp. 235, 238).
CHAPTER 3
ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD AND PROCESS PHILOSOPHY

There are in the history of civilization certain dates which stand out as marking either the boundaries or the culminations of critical epochs. It is true that no epoch either commences, ends, or sums itself up in one definite moment. It is brought upon the stage of reality in the arms of its predecessors, and only yields to its successor by reason of a slow process of transformation. Its terminals are conventional. Wherever you choose to fix them, you can be confronted with good reasons for an extension or contraction of your period. But the meridian culmination is sometimes unmistakable, and it is often marked by some striking events which lend an almost mystic symbolism to their exact date. (Whitehead, 1948, p. 166)

Thus writes the aged philosopher late in life as he describes a date he considers a pivotal point in the history of science and the world. The year was 1642, and it was a landmark year because of two events, the death of Galileo and the birth of Sir Isaac Newton—the “becoming” and “perishing” of two intellectual giants whose lives passed, unknown to either of them, in the middle of a critical century in the history of the world. Whitehead proposes in this passage the idea that the world would have been a vastly different place had not those two great thinkers lived and worked when they did. They provided, at precisely the proper moments in time, what he refers to as “a clear physical synthesis” (p. 166) and thus established the base for further advances.

The year marked, as well, the midpoint that Whitehead equates with the progress of modern times. Once again, in his view, it was time for a “recasting” of thought. Ironically, the passage relates, as well, a very accurate and metaphorical description of Whitehead’s philosophy: process surrounds us—the past moves into the present, creating moments of self-realization, or in Whiteheadian terms, “throbs” of experience—and it happens over and over; the process is endless. All the key points of Whitehead’s philosophy are present in his description of the epoch, the chief one being that “whatever is born in the world is deeply rooted in the past and connected with the actual entities” (Kishan, 1964, p. 20). Also key is that in a Whiteheadian world, process is everywhere and at all times providing new creations; indeed, it is the foundation of everything in the universe.
Alfred North Whitehead left London in 1924 to accept an appointment as Professor of Philosophy at Harvard. The move, made when he was sixty-three years of age, is generally considered the actual beginning of his career as a philosopher. Disenchanted with his position at the University of London and eager for a change, Whitehead welcomed, as he phrased it, the "opportunity of developing in systematic form [his] ideas on Logic, the Philosophy of Science, Metaphysics, and some more general questions, half philosophical and half practical, such as Education. . . ." (qtd. in Lawrence, 1974, pp. 22-23). He arrived for a five-year appointment and remained for thirteen years, completing during that time all of his major philosophical works. Although many argue that he was formulating the foundation of his philosophical scheme in his earlier life and writings (a theme to be developed in the following chapter of this dissertation), it was after he came to America that seven of his major books were published. Among those seven works are Science and the Modern World, The Function of Reason, Process and Reality, Adventures of Ideas, and Modes of Thought.

In all of his later works, one finds clues to understanding Whitehead's notions on science, mathematics, and philosophy; and they are all useful in an examination of the development of his thinking. However, it is to Process and Reality that one must ultimately go for a complete exploration of the metaphysical system of thought that he developed fully after his arrival in America. Considered his greatest writing, Process and Reality is the work which explains what was considered by many in the 1920s a radical new way of thinking about the realities of life—a philosophy which, pluralistic in tone, opposed the traditional view of substance and acknowledged only process. It was both realistic and relativistic and "emphasize[d] the importance of the one, to the remaining others" (Kishan, 1964, p. 9).

Explication of the Process

Whitehead begins the first chapter of Process and Reality (1978/1929) with a definition of Speculative Philosophy. In a passage that has often been quoted as an expression of his belief about the purpose of philosophy, he describes Speculative Philosophy as an attempt to construct a general theory of everything.
that the individual experiences, an arrangement of ideas such that “everything of which we are conscious, as enjoyed, perceived, willed, or thought, shall have the character of a particular instance of a general scheme” (p. 3). The goal is generalization; this is central in his thinking. It is also necessary in understanding his philosophical scheme.

Whitehead, in attempting to construct a new system, develops what many consider a unique fusion of Platonic thought and real world thinking. Called by Wein (1957) “the last of the great Platonists of Cambridge” (p. xi), he never turns his back on the Platonic tradition; yet at the same time he proposes some non-Platonic ideas. In fact, early in Process and Reality he admits that

> in one sense the train of thought in these lectures is Platonic. . . But I do mean more: I mean that if we had to render Plato’s general point of view with the least changes made necessary by the intervening two thousand years of experience . . . we should have to set about the construction of a philosophy of organism. (p. 39)

He acknowledges his foundation as Platonic, but at the same time recognizes the importance of the nature of the real world and a need for a new philosophy; this is the reasoning behind his development of the philosophy of organism.

According to Mohanty (1957), Whitehead supplements a philosophy of ideal being with a philosophy of the real world. This idea is supported by Whiteheadian scholar Lowe (1990), who notes that Whitehead utilizes the insights of Plato, as well as Locke and other giants, in his new philosophy. An intellectual nonconformist in his attitude of opposition to many of the philosophical traditions of his day, he does, nevertheless, base his thinking in the very traditional philosophy of Platonism. However, Lowe is also careful to point out the uniqueness of Whitehead, concluding that “taken as a whole, his disposition cannot be subsumed under any philosophical movement of the twentieth century or accurately seen as the joint effect of other philosophers on its author. It has its own elements and its own structure, and must be understood in its own terms” (p. 225).

An understanding of Whitehead must begin with the idea that nothing exists independent of any other thing—we must see that “all . . . functionings of Nature

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influence each other, require each other, and lead on to each other" (1938, p. 215); and we must keep this idea always in mind as we contemplate Whitehead’s philosophy. His world is a world of relations and relating, a mode of thinking I find especially meaningful because it creates (and did so even early in my perusals) a connection or a relating to the relations I discovered in the post-modern curriculum envisioned by William Doll.10 Doll (1993), also influenced by process philosophy, says that Whitehead’s relational concept of the world can be found early in his writing. He points to the 1906 work entitled “On Mathematical Concepts of the Material World” as the place where Whitehead “begins to look at the material world, the ‘stuff in space,’ to use his phrase, in terms of relations . . . [and where he begins to believe] that reality is ultimately an ongoing process: of becoming, of perishing” (p. 143). To Whitehead reality is always “a becoming”—never static, ever changing—reality is fluid and all times in process. In Modes of Thought (1938), Whitehead states:

The vividness of life lies in the transition, with its forms aiming at the issue. Actuality in its essence is aim at self-formation. One main doctrine, developed in these lectures, is that “existence” (in any of its senses) cannot be abstracted from “process.” The notions of “process” and “existence” presuppose each other. (p. 131)

He says also in Process and Reality (1978/1929) that “there is nothing in the real world which is merely an inert fact. Every reality is there for feeling: it promotes feeling; and it is felt” (p. 310). Feelings are paramount to Whitehead; indeed, they are at the foundation of his vision of the world ever in process.

The world as a process is Alfred Whitehead’s theory of existence—his greatest achievement—and it is this theory that he attempts to explain in his massive work Process and Reality. He states, quite plainly, in the third sentence of the book that it is his “endeavor to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted” (p. 3). And this he does. In language difficult, challenging, and sometimes extremely obscure, Whitehead paints a picture of a world always becoming, growing from previous “becomings” into new “becomings.” A theory
too complex to attempt to explicate in its entirety, it is one, nevertheless, whose major components must be considered in order to be successfully understood; and even a close analysis of Whitehead does not guarantee immediate understanding.

In Section II of “The Categorical Scheme,” Whitehead announces four categories: The Ultimate, Existence, Explanation, and Obligations, as the frame for his philosophical system. Within each of the four categories are sub-categories, forty-five in all that introduce and discuss the terms and notions he uses to explain his theory. Since the first two categories are primarily lists, Lowe (1990) compares Whitehead’s method to that of a mathematician who first states his theorems and axioms and then makes the application (p. 229). The Category of the Ultimate, which is the first and which is presupposed in the other three categories, is composed of only three terms creativity, many, and one. The other categories, though, are more numerous: there are eight Categories of Existence, twenty-seven principles in the Categories of Explanation, and nine Categorical Obligations. They are all essential— all absolutely necessary—for an understanding of process and reality. However, it is the third category where the novice finds the most help; for in this section, Whitehead details the salient points of his philosophy.

Of the twenty-seven categories of explanation, it is the first that describes the world in the manner that has come to be known as process philosophy. In this first category Whitehead writes “that the actual world is a process, and that the process is the becoming of actual entities. Thus, actual entities are creatures; they are also termed ‘actual occasions’ ”(p. 22). This, in itself not sufficient for a working knowledge of Whitehead, is Whitehead. Although I am not a mathematician, I see that first statement as an algebra property I learned long ago:

\[
\text{if } a \ (\text{world}) = b \ (\text{process}) \quad \text{and } b \ (\text{process}) = c \ (\text{becoming}) \\
\text{then } a \ (\text{world}) = c \ (\text{becoming})
\]

And that, from a very mathematical perspective, is Whitehead’s view of the world: the world is becoming— this is the basis of his philosophy. Unfortunately, it is not that simple. How does the world become? What keeps the process going? And what are the meanings behind the very technical words he utilizes to describe his
philosophy (e.g., the actual entities)? To begin to understand Whitehead, one must speak his language, which means learning the basic vocabulary he developed to express his understanding of the world. Among the concepts most basic to Whiteheadian philosophy are actual entities, prehensions, concrescence, nexus, perishing, and eternal objects.

Although there is no beginning or ending in Whitehead's process, the most logical starting point is with the actual entities, which Whitehead defines as "the finite real things of which the world is made up" and of which he says it is impossible to find anything "more real" (p. 18). The most concrete elements in the universe, actual entities are real, individual, and particular facts; and they encompass not only living and non-living things but also conscious and non-conscious beings. According to Whitehead, "God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space" (p. 18). Actual entities vary among themselves in importance and in function; but as the basic entities of existence, representing final realities, Whitehead tells us that all actual entities are also actual occasions, except for God; God is an actual entity, but he is not an actual occasion. Except for that difference, actual entities and actual occasions are interchangeable. In answering the question as to how one recognizes an actual occasion, Lowe (1990) responds:

My answer is that anything in human experience may be treated as an actual occasion so far as it approximates to the design of an actual occasion set out in the philosophy of organism. Whitehead himself so treated a "drop of experience," which lasts as long as a "specious present." What about other events? When I asked him [Whitehead] whether the emission of a single quantum of energy was an actual occasion, he replied, "Probably a whole shower of actual occasions." It seems to me that an event which has a duration of years, such as the determination and execution of a specific national policy, might also be considered an approximation to an actual occasion. (p. 268)

In no place in his writings does Whitehead address the time span of an actual entity. He proposes basic concepts but overlooks, or dismisses, the specific application. That part he leaves for his students. Proposing a philosophy which offers a general way of thinking about the process of the universe, Whitehead's
concern is providing a basis—and a scheme which will offer a means of discovering that which is truly real.

The individual, basic reality of actual entities is important, but so is their relatedness. In fact, the interconnections and deep relations among actual entities cannot be overemphasized. Whitehead describes all actual entities as “drops of experience, complex and interdependent” (p. 18), noting throughout his writing that they never exist in isolation and that they are at all times dependent on other actual entities. He points out early in The Categoreal Scheme that actual entities involve each other by reason of their prehensions of each other. There are thus real individual facts of the togetherness of actual entities, which are real, individual, and particular, in the same sense in which actual entities and the prehensions are real, individual and particular. Any such particular fact of togetherness among actual entities is called a “nexus” (plural form is written “nexus”). The ultimate facts of immediate actual experience are actual entities, prehensions, and nexus. All else, is for our experience, derivative abstraction. (p. 20)

Sellars (1941) notes that the “togetherness” described by Whitehead is a togetherness within any actual entity, as well as among actual entities (p. 412). And always there is dependence of actual entities on each other. They possess individuality, but they are not independent units of existence.

The second Category of Existence is the prehension, a name Whitehead uses in his earlier work Science and the Modern World (1967/1925) to mean “apprehension.” A key term in Whitehead’s complex vocabulary, the prehension is central to understanding the process by which an actual entity comes into being. Defined as the “Concrete Facts of Relatedness,” prehensions are what compose, or actually make up, the actual entity. In fact, an actual entity, Whitehead’s foundational concept of the universe, is perhaps most clearly described as “a concrescence [or a growing together] of prehensions, which have originated in its process of becoming” (1978/1929, p. 35). To look at an actual entity, therefore, is to look at a society of prehensions. Lowe (1990) further explains, “When one event . . . takes account of another in its environment, that is a prehension of the
environmental occasion. In the prehending occasion, many concurrent prehensions are integrated. Whitehead calls the integrating occasion an organism" (p. 163).

Like most of Whitehead’s other process-created terms, prehensions are unique and complicated and can themselves be broken down for analysis. Integral to the philosophy of organism, a prehension consists of three factors: (1) the "subject," which does the prehending; (2) the "datum," which is prehended; and (3) the "subjective form," which describes how the subject prehends the datum. John Cobb (1993) adds clarification by explaining an immediately past occasion of experience in a present occasion, or the present prehension of that past occasion:

The present occasion of experience is the subject of this prehension. The immediately past occasion is the datum of this prehension. A datum is an object for the subject for which it is given. In this way the subject-object structure of experience is reaffirmed.

But notice that the object of the experience is itself an occasion of experience that [has] come into being as a subject of prehensions of other occasions. What is felt in the present occasion are the feelings of the past occasion. Those feelings or prehensions are its objects, but as feelings they have not lost their subjective forms. The difference is only that they are now completed and finished—in short, past. The world of (actual) objects is the world of past subjects. (p. 175)

Also of significance, as Sherburne (1981) points out, are the two primary types of prehensions: the positive prehension, which includes its datum during synthesis, and the negative prehension, which excludes its datum during the synthesis. In other words, positive prehensions are absorbed during the process of concrescence, and negative prehensions are repelled.

Each relation, or relating, begins with a positive prehension, or a feeling, Whitehead’s notion that “involves emotion, and purpose, and valuation, and causation” (1978/1929, p. 19). Occurring as one life relates to another or others, the prehension is unconscious. It is also, according to Whitehead, vectoral in nature; for it “feel[s] what is there and transforms it into what is here” (p. 87). The vectors should be viewed, in the opinion of Lowe (1962), as arrows, running from the past to the present and “from the objects to a subject . . . For Whitehead the subject which enjoys an experience does not exist beforehand, neither is it created from

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the outside; it creates itself in that very process of experiencing" (p. 40). Lowe views the transmission of feelings as "the fulcrum of Whitehead's philosophy," explaining that Whitehead wants you to "actually feel your experience of a moment ago growing into your present experience and compelling some conformation to it" (p. 342). I see the transmission as critical to understanding the importance of feelings in Whitehead, for it is in the transmission that one finds the relation and the relating: the past moves into the present—it is transmitted—and before the perishing it is, for a moment, a part of that present. The becoming contains the past and the present—for a moment. Both the past and the present are there all rolled into one; the becoming, therefore, is a pulse, or a throb, of both past and present. And the connectedness is of primary importance.

One of the most remarkable facts about actual entities is the fact that others grow from them after they have perished and moved into the actual world of the many, forming what I envision as a pool of possibilities for future experiences. Thus, experience truly is, as Whitehead (1978/1929) proposes, "the self-enjoyment of being one among many, and of being one arising out of the composition of many" (p. 145). And that composition is in a state of perpetual change; therefore, "no two actual entities originate from an identical universe" (p. 22). The nexus of one actual occasion is never exactly the same as the nexus of any other occasion. As Whitehead writes, "The ancient doctrine that 'no one crosses the same river twice' is extended. No thinker thinks twice; and, to put the matter more generally, no subject experiences twice" (p. 29). Every entity has an immediate existence in and for itself: for a moment the entity exists, but it is only for that one instant of experience which Whitehead labels a drop or a pulse. An actual occasion becomes and then it perishes, moving into the universe of all those occasions that had one time become and then ceased to be. It recedes into that multitude of other occasions; but it is always there, a vital part of that universe Whitehead terms the "nexus," or the "particular fact of togetherness among actual entities" (p. 20). The world is in process, never the same, filled always with new and different relations and new and different creations.
And creation is a vital part of Whitehead’s thinking. Indeed, creativity is the ultimate of ultimates he calls “the universal of universals . . . [the] ultimate principle” (p. 21). As noted in Chapter 1, creativity is the “eternal activity” which provides the energy that actually propels the constant growth of new experiences. Whitehead explains:

“Creativity” is the principle of novelty. An actual occasion is a novel entity diverse from any entity in the “many” which it unifies. Thus “creativity” introduces novelty into the content of the many, which are the universe disjunctively. The “creative advance” is the application of this ultimate principle of creativity to each novel situation which it originates. (p. 21)

Without creativity there would be no new “becomings”; creativity is central in Whitehead’s process of life.

Also of great significance, especially in the mind of the philosopher himself, is the perishing of an actual entity. In fact, Whitehead (1948) states;

Almost all of Process and Reality can be read as an attempt to analyse perishing on the same level as Aristotle’s analysis of becoming. The notion of the prehension of the past means that the past is an element which perishes and thereby remains an element in the state beyond, and thus is objectified. That is the whole notion. If you get a general notion of what is meant by perishing, you will have accomplished an apprehension of what you mean by memory and causality, what you mean when you feel that what we are is of infinite importance, because as we perish we are immortal. That is the one key thought around which the whole development of Process and Reality is woven. (p. 89)

In the philosophy of organism, which is Whitehead’s term for his theory, perishing occurs at the completion of the concrescence. When the actual entity has become, it “perishes” in the sense that it ceases to be a subject. Passing into the nexus, it becomes, instead, an object for all future subjects; and as an object becomes what Whitehead calls a “superject” of creativity. Whitehead believes that philosophers have not paid enough attention to the notion of perishing and its link with becoming. To him it is central, for he sees the universe at every moment involved in the process of becoming and perishing. As he states in the Preface to Process and Reality (1978/1929), the relatedness of actual events “is wholly concerned with the appropriation of the dead by the living . . . whereby what is divested of its own
living immediacy becomes a real component in other living immediacies of becoming” (pp. xiii-xiv).

Actual entities and the process through which they “become” and “perish” provide a basic understanding of Whitehead’s philosophy; however, to understand completely the world Whitehead describes, a careful consideration of the fifth Category of Existence is essential. In this category Whitehead introduces eternal objects, or, as he also names them, “Pure Potentials for the Specific Determination of Fact, or Forms of Definiteness.” Fundamental to his theory, the eternal objects are universal abstractions like colors, shapes, and forms. Whitehead calls attention to their import, noting in the discussion at the end of The Categories of Existence, that “among [the] eight categories . . . actual entities and eternal objects stand out with a certain extreme finality” (p. 22). In linking them there, perhaps he is implying that not only are they important, but they are also important to each other.

Certainly, most readers of Whitehead recognize that the relationship between the two categories is critical. Mohanty (1957), in fact, views Process and Reality as a study in contrast between actual entities and eternal objects: whereas eternal objects are abstract, actual entities are concrete; eternal objects are possibilities, but actual entities are actualities (pp. 58-59). They are related, but they are also different. Still others go a step beyond that and propose an even greater emphasis on the relatedness. Kishan (1964), for example, asserts that “the twin concepts of eternal objects and actual entities are inseparable” (p. 26). He points out that eternal objects define all objects and that actual entities, which reflect the combining and merging of elements that have perished, are not the result of random events but, rather, purposeful formation as determined by eternal objects. Kishan continues:

These objects have the quality of permanence and eternality according to the philosophy of organism. Whitehead observes that eternal objects are the determining factors of the form and existence of actual entities. . . . As the property, shape and quality of things are determined by the eternal objects, there is no wonder that the ordinary things of the world gain great importance in the philosophy.
of Whitehead. Things perish and vanish away and are merged into other things without diminishing their importance. Things are vibrating with the eternal and universal elements. (p. 26)

Whitehead avoids the use of the word universal, although some scholars attach it to descriptions and discussions of the eternal objects. His emphasis is on the eternality and, as always, the relatedness. The important fact to him is that the perishing actual entity passes away but does not disappear; it simply exists in other forms.

Perhaps in no other element or concept of Whitehead's philosophy is the influence of Plato seen more clearly than in the eternal objects. Many through the years have equated the Whiteheadian eternal objects with the Platonic forms. Even to those unacquainted with the intricacies of Platonic thought, the eternal objects appear similar and a definite link. And there are other points of comparison between the two; in fact, all of Plato's important concepts are present in Whitehead's philosophy—his influence must be acknowledged. However, it is also important to remember that, in certain aspects, Whitehead's philosophy of process reflects traces of other philosophic thinkers besides Plato. In the Preface to Process and Reality Whitehead cites as his base "that phase of philosophic thought which began with Descartes and ended with Hume" and then points to John Locke as "the writer who most fully anticipated the main positions of the philosophy of organism" (p. xi). He also acknowledges that he is indebted to Bergson, James, and Dewey.

But Whitehead is an individualist; and just as process philosophy includes some traditional ideas and theories, so does it exclude others. For example, Whitehead does not accept some points of Aristotle's teachings, nor does he accept, in any way, the theory of reality as a rigid, unmoving substance. What's most unique about his metaphysical scheme is the manner in which he synthesizes several major philosophic traditions with his own unique perspective of the process of experience and in so doing creates a new, very novel way of thinking about the world. In the 1920s, Whitehead was a nontraditional thinker attempting to free
philosophy from the "dominance of narrow views, dogmatism, and slavery to old ideas" (Kishan, 1964, p. 14)—quite, then, a modern. Today, David Ray Griffin (1993) calls him a postmodern, and a very prominent one, whose influence is major in "the midst of a fundamental 'paradigm shift,' [which Griffin asserts] parallels in scope the change that occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (p. 31). Half a century later, Griffin points to the prominence of the two periods Whitehead describes in his essay "The First Physical Synthesis"; and, like Whitehead, affirms their unique positions in the history of the modern and post-modern world as junctions of change. What is most ironic is that even as Whitehead recorded the need for a "recasting" of thought, he was participating himself as a key player, and had at the time of his writing, although he was very likely not aware of the extent of his influence, already initiated the process.

Whitehead, an humble man in spite of his genius, was known for always apologizing for his inadequacies. He was keenly aware of the imperfection of his philosophy, noting always the need for criticism and revision. According to Lowe (1950), he remarked on many occasions that he intended his work to be merely "a set of suggestions"; and he left his listeners and students always with the attitude that they were to—"Take it from here" (p. 3). Never intending or even believing in his ability to provide all the answers, Whitehead thought and worked in generalities; he endeavored, as he stated over and over, to provide "a general scheme" (p. 3). He acknowledged and seemed not to be concerned with the flaws in his work, which is, perhaps, one of the reasons for the numerous errors in his published pieces. Even his masterpiece Process and Reality, when first published, was filled with misspelled words and awkward construction, which was true of most of his work. Too occupied with new and challenging concepts to proofread and revise, Whitehead, when a work was completed, left it and was off on other adventurous ideas. Barzun (qtd. in Lowe, 1950) provides an insightful look at the unusual combination of theory and concreteness contributing to the genius of Whitehead; though written over half a century ago, the words are still applicable today:
Even when his prose is full of snarls and knots, which is usually the result of trying to tame original ideas, one always has the sense of his direct contact with experience, of his concreteness. This last quality is what is so conspicuously lacking in what is offered us today as thought. We like to believe that it is the Whiteheads of this world who are "abstract thinkers" and need to be brought down to earth. The fact is, only a great mind has the secret of being in touch with things; the abstract ones are the run-of-the-mill philosophers...; it is your plain fellow whose head is a gas balloon, and who can only be brought down to earth by being exploded. (pp. 4-5)

This is the greatness of Whitehead, the metaphysician—"a great mind" who possesses also the unique attribute "of being in touch with things"; this is also, I think, the key to the greatness of Whitehead, the teacher.

**Philosophy and Teaching: Preliminary Connections**

The theory of process, as intricate, complex, and abstract as it is, touches also the "realness" of the classroom. A close exploration, in fact, reveals that the metaphysical reality of the philosopher contains significant points of relation to the physical realities of the educator's world. In fact, as the scholar moves from an analysis of Whitehead's philosophical theories to an examination of his educational views, it becomes apparent that the distance between the two is not as great as one might expect. In fact, as the foundation on which Whitehead bases his educational thinking, the philosophy of organism holds numerous connections for the student and the teacher. Among those most important in an initial perusal are those central in both his early and later works: the world as a world of relations, the world as an ongoing process, and the world as a world which "perishes" even as it "becomes."

In 1938, Whitehead wrote that "all... functionings of Nature influence each other, require each other, and lead on to each other" (p. 215). This one statement, taken alone and excluding all other aspects of Whitehead, possesses the potential for a powerful impact in the classroom. Fifty years before real-life connections and interdisciplinary trends, Whitehead advises educators to take note and act on the fact that very important relations exist within and among students, teachers, and the subject matter. There are influences that must be acknowledged, and there are requirements that must be accepted. Most importantly, teachers need to cultivate
the connections between and among all things which point on to even more (and increasingly richer) connections. One of the chief lessons for the teacher in the relations of Whitehead is found in the mass of interconnections that occur as the actual entity moves through concrescence. It should be noted that during the process there are many many relations, not just one. And so should it be in the classroom; why should the teacher or the student be satisfied with one connection when the experience would be infinitely richer by looking always for additional connections?

Another major point of relation for the educator is found in Whitehead's view of the world as an ongoing process, of "becomings" growing from prior "becomings" and looking onward to still greater "becomings." In his writings Whitehead respects both the past, which offers an innumerable pool of prior experiences, and the future; but it is the present which he refers to as "holy ground" (1929a, p. 3). It is the present, during that pulse or throb of concrescence, that offers the moment of greatest potential for the student and the teacher. As the teacher and student draw upon prior experiences and at the same time look to the future, the present becomes a rich backdrop for the "becoming." However, none of the three can stand alone: the past is part of the present, the present requires the past, and both present and past look toward the future. Once again, there is the necessity of connections; once again there is the process that moves unceasingly forward, creating as it goes, moments of experience, moments of growth.

Whitehead also repeatedly emphasizes the importance of creativity as the actual entity moves through the process. Calling it "the universal of universals" (1978/1929, p. 21), he places creativity at the center of his theory and points on many occasions to its role as the force behind the "becomings." Likewise, in the classroom creativity should be always a welcome, central element, an assistant to the teacher during every lesson. There is no better motivational "technique" than the thrill a student feels after a moment of creativity, be it a poem or simply an original thought. This the teacher should never forget, for in this manner the present
truly does come “alive” with the potential for growth Whitehead maintains is so essential in the classroom. Like the process philosopher, the teacher should relish creativity and the moments of “becoming.”

In *Process and Reality* “becoming” is paramount; in fact, the philosophy of organism appears, on the first or second examination, to be a picture of the process by which the actual entity “becomes,” or concresces. According to Whitehead, however, this is not the case. He states, instead, late in life that the work should be read as an analysis of “perishing” (1948, p. 89); for as the actual entity becomes, it also perishes and passes into the nexus as a potential for future prehensions. This I find to be one of the most prominent and promising points of connection for the educator. The moment of experience, after the perishing, achieves a sort of immortality; it is gone from the immediate present, but it is present for future experiences and can be called upon on a moment’s notice. To me, this says simply, “The lesson’s never completely over; rather, it’s a potential for future lessons.” That lesson, or that experience, becomes a part of prior experiences that exist forever, reappearing a bit altered as a part of a future actual occasion but existing just the same.” From a personal perspective, the perishing connects to many of the disconnections that have been such major forces in my professional life. As the experiences “perished,” so did many of my treasured places and personal belongings. In my recent past, a great many of my connections have, in fact, been disconnections; but from these disconnections have grown even greater, and at times, more meaningful connections. This, when applied to the “actual entity” or the lesson, has the potential for some very powerful connections for the teacher and the student. It is, I think, a point that deserves further reflection and evaluation.

And there are other points of relation between the philosophical theory and the educational theory; however, those points will be best presented and understood after an exploration of Whitehead’s educational writings. Like *Process and Reality*, a study of Whitehead should unfold in parts, accompanied always with returns and revisitings of prior readings, which will then lead on to future ones. To a
Whiteheadian thinker, that's the way the world is--"in process." The beauty and joy in life revolve around self-realization, which, according to Whitehead (1978/1929), "is the ultimate fact of facts. An actuality is self-realizing, and whatever is self-realizing is an actuality" (p. 222). And this is the reality of life: self-creation—becomings—feelings—again and again. In a Whiteheadian world "life is the enjoyment of emotion, derived from the past and aimed at the future. It is the enjoyment of emotion which was then, which is now, and which will be then" (1938, p. 229).

**End Notes**

9. Brumbaugh, in *Plato for the Modern Age* (1962) calls Whitehead's work "a high point in modern Platonism, bringing into focus the changes in Plato that Whitehead believes we need to adapt the great Greek philosopher's ideas to the modern world" (p. 212). He also notes Whitehead's doubts that Plato would have approved.

10. In *A Post-Modern Perspective on Curriculum*, William Doll (1993) suggests replacing the traditional three R's ("Readin', 'Riting, 'Rithmetic") of the modernist with his four R's ("Richness, Recursion, Relations, Rigor") to create a curriculum that will prepare students for the post-modern world. Although Doll states that his post-modern vision for education is centered around Rorty-Kundera's "fascinating, imaginative realm where no one owns the truth and everyone has the right to be understood" (p. 155), it is evident after reading his work that he is a Whiteheadian scholar as well. Describing the post-modern curriculum as "a process—not of transmitting what is (absolutely) known but of exploring what is unknown; and through exploration students and teachers 'clear the land' together, thereby transforming both the land and themselves" (p. 155), Doll integrates process thought into his vision of a "fascinating, imaginative" curriculum.

11. Whitehead's actual entities, which he describes as "creatures," should be viewed from another perspective as well; they are, in fact, beings. He states, "An actual entity is to be conceived both as a subject presiding over its own immediacy of becoming, and a superject which is the atomic creature exercising its function of objective immortality. It has become a 'being'; and it belongs to the nature of every 'being' that it is a potential for every 'becoming' " (1978/1929, p. 45). One should also note that, according to Whitehead, every actual entity "has a perfectly definite bond with each item in the universe. This determinate bond is its prehension of that item" (p. 41). As the student of Whitehead makes his/her way deeper into the language of process, the import of the "becomings" becomes apparent.

12. Transmission is the word Victor Lowe uses, and it is also a word used by Whitehead himself in both *Process and Reality* and *Modes of Thought*. However, the beginning scholar attempting to understand the complexities of Whitehead's vocabulary may consider the words transference or movement to
assist in understanding what occurs as the prehension moves toward that moment of **actual entity-ness** [my word]. Again, I point to the passage where Whitehead asserts, "In Cartesian language, the essence of an actual entity consists solely in the fact that it is a prehending thing (i.e., a substance whose whole essence of nature is to prehend)" (1978/1929, p. 41).
CHAPTER 4

THE EDUCATIONAL VISION OF ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD

Alfred North Whitehead, the philosopher who produced *Process and Reality* and other important philosophical works, is also recognized as an insightful teacher and an astute educational theorist. And rightly so, for a close look at his life reveals not only links and interests in schools and education weaving throughout his life but also a dedication to teaching and the improvement of education which some might argue is as strong as his devotion to metaphysics. The son and grandson of a British schoolmaster, he was brought up in an environment strongly connected to education and among scholarly individuals quite familiar with the profession of teaching. Lowe (1990) tells us that as a small child Whitehead actually accompanied his father as he made rounds to the three parochial schools in his district, which was possible because his father (also Alfred Whitehead) taught him at home during the early, foundational years. Thus, his entry into the traditional school environment was a bit delayed—his official entry, that is, since schooling and schoolmasters were always an actuality in his life.

When Alfred Whitehead finally entered public school at the age of fourteen, it was, in fact, the beginning of many decades in the formal school environment and the field of education. Like his father and grandfather before him, he was destined to follow the call of the classroom, a call that would summon him first, as a scholar and mathematician; later, as a teacher of mathematics concerned with educational reform; and finally, as an esteemed professor of philosophy. Because of his expertise and wisdom in many diverse fields, Whitehead speaks from multiple perspectives; ever visible, however, in all the many and varied classrooms, is the presence of the teacher. In classrooms which stretch from Cambridge to the University of London to Harvard, Alfred North Whitehead—mathematician and philosopher—is also, at all times, Alfred North Whitehead—the teacher, exhibiting in his voice and his written words an overriding concern for the student and the nature of learning, as well as the subject matter. Perhaps, one of the most remarkable facts about Whitehead's educational writings, is that, although they were written
over half a century ago, they are as applicable in America or Britain today as they were at the turn of the century—addressing in a timeless manner topics timeless in nature.

Although Whitehead is primarily remembered for the widely read essay "The Aims of Education," he wrote many others, as well, in which he freely and candidly expressed his beliefs about education in England, both as it was and as he thought it should be. Always strong in his convictions regarding what needed to be done and vocal about what was wrong with current practice, he published during the fourteen years he lived in London (1910-1924) two essays and ten addresses on education. After that time, the majority of his effort was spent on the development of his metaphysics and the writing of his great philosophical works. Thus, the educational writings of this early period are essential in an exploration of Whitehead, the educator; indeed, they provide the foundation of his philosophy of education. Equally significant, however, is the critical role the educational theories and works play in the development of the vast, complex cosmology known today as process philosophy.

It is important to note that process philosophy, though incomplete and only beginning to unfold in Whitehead's mind at that stage of his life, is evident in embryonic form in the educational writings. Often overlooked because, in most cases, the "philosophical process embryo" exists only as a phrase or a word, it is, nevertheless, there, just as his educational views appear many times quite unexpectedly amidst profound discussions in his purely philosophical works. The connections between the two realms of thought, therefore, are salient and reaffirm what the serious Whiteheadian educator eventually acknowledges as a twofold given: (1) the necessity of a complete study of all the early educational writings and (2) the necessity of an understanding of the theories of process philosophy to understand and appreciate fully the vast scope of the genius of Alfred North Whitehead, the teacher. In short, the complexities of process thought are as intertwined and interconnected with the principles of process educational thought as the actual entity is intertwined and interconnected with the complex relations...
involved in its concrescence. They "require each other," a phrase Whitehead uses frequently to describe his vision of the world. For that reason, the following explication of the educational writings will include not only the widely read (and seminal essay) "The Aims of Education" but also the very important (but less often studied) early educational addresses. And throughout the exploration, connections between process philosophy and process education will be a preeminent concern; for only that perspective can provide a clear picture of Whitehead's vision of process education and the possibilities it holds for the teacher.

**The Early Educational Writings**

The first of Whitehead's educational writings, an essay entitled "The Place of Mathematics in a Liberal Education," was published in November of 1911 in the *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Mathematics for the Southeastern Part of England*, a publication concerned with the teaching of mathematics in the elementary grades. Delivered as his inaugural address to the association which had chosen him as its first president, the essay addresses the education of boys through the age of nineteen. Specifically, it deals with the manner in which elementary algebra should be studied; but it offers, as well, the foundational theories and ideas of the educational philosophy that Whitehead will continue to disclose, develop, and present from this point forward in his life. He proposes, first and foremost, the development of logic and understanding instead of repetitious drills of numerous formulas, asserting to his audience what he terms a "protest against the presentation of mathematics as a silly subject with silly applications" (1948, p. 134). In addition, he declares the need for application of ideas to important examples. Whitehead concludes the address with attention to a basic belief which he refers to as an "essential principle . . . simplify the details and emphasize the important principles and applications" (p. 139). This tenet will be a recurrent theme in all his subsequent works.

Whitehead's second educational address, presented at Cambridge in August of 1912, was a paper entitled "The Principles of Mathematics in Relation to Elementary Teaching," in which he once again, as in his first essay, stresses the
importance of reasoning abilities in the teaching of mathematics. In addition, he asserts the need for analysis and generalization and goes on to state that training in these two critical areas must begin with the ideas within the mind of the child. Concerned with the kinds of facts present in a child’s mind, a theme that will reappear in “The Aims of Education” essay, Whitehead (1974/1917) states, “The schoolmaster is in fact a missionary, the savages are the ideas in the child’s mind; and the missionary shirks his main task if he refuse to risk his body among the cannibals” (p. 102). Whitehead further states that mathematics instruction is a failure if the pupil fails to attain reasoning ability. This is another fundamental idea that he will repeat less than a year later in an address which delivers essentially the same meaning although it uses somewhat different words.

The title of that next address was “The Mathematical Curriculum,” and it was delivered as the presidential address to the London Branch of the Mathematical Association in March of 1913. In this speech, as the title indicates, Whitehead outlines the ideal mathematics curriculum, calling once again for attention to training students to handle abstractions, to avoid the pointless accumulation of detail, and to apply knowledge. Instead of a multitude of theorems and unrelated details, he proposes, instead, “the simple study of a few general truths, well illustrated by practical examples” (1929a, p. 81). According to Whitehead, the goal of math instruction “is that the pupil should acquire familiarity with abstract thought, should realise how it applies to particular concrete circumstances, and should know how to apply general methods to its logical investigation” (pp. 79-80).

Although the primary concern is mathematical instruction, Whitehead views also in this address the current state of English education, which he characterizes as an “educational revolution.” Like other periods of great change, the turn of the century is an era, he writes, when “the traditional intellectual outlook, despite the authority which it [has] justly acquired from its notable triumphs, [has] grown to be too narrow for the interests of mankind”; as a result there is a demand for what he calls “a parallel shifting of the basis of education” (p. 77). This is an absolute necessity, he claims, if the pupils are to be prepared, informed, and capable of
meeting the demands of the period in which they are growing up and in which they will be living. He goes on in this address to discuss the necessity of relevance to modern thought and the acquisition of fitness to solve the difficulties of the "modern" times facing educators of that day. In a passage which foreshadows his future statements regarding "dead ideas," Whitehead writes:

There is no such thing as a successful system of education in a vacuum, that is to say, a system which is divorced from immediate contact with the existing intellectual atmosphere. Education which is not modern shares the fate of all organic things which are kept too long. (p. 77)

Thus, early in the educational writings, the student of Whitehead discovers an emphasis on the "alive-ness" of not only education but also educational systems. Also evident, although not expressed in the vocabulary he will later use to delineate his philosophy of process, is a central element in his theory, i.e., relations and relating to one's world. Whitehead, though considering and addressing at this point relationships within and among the educational "atmosphere," is also quite obviously exploring the rudimentary concepts of a wider terrain. Unknown to those around him at this time, this is a period of great intellectual activity—an exciting time but also, quite likely, a tumultuous time for the teacher-thinker as he explores, combines, and begins to synthesize the ideas which will form the predominant ideas of his philosophy.

Whitehead's most famous educational writing, "The Aims of Education," is the presidential address he delivered in January of 1916 to the Mathematical Association, a teacher organization which developed out of a group called the Association for the Improvement of Geometrical Teaching, founded in 1871. The purpose of the address is evident in the little known subtitle "A Plea for Reform," a most accurate description of the theme Whitehead pursues throughout the speech. Although he was talking to mathematics teachers about the teaching of their specific discipline, much of what he says can be applied to education in general. In "The Aims of Education" Whitehead reveals the critical, basic points composing the foundation of his educational philosophy, which is the main reason that through the
years this has been the work most often read and quoted, especially by those who have only read one or two Whiteheadian works. Even Lowe (1990) acknowledges that "The Aims of Education" is the Whitehead educational writing the student should read if forced to choose only one (p. 47). Brief and easily comprehended, the essay proposes principles fundamental to an understanding of Whitehead's thinking on both study and the student: the ideas most central are the need for living ideas for living, "alive" students and the need to teach a little and teach it well. The philosophy, clear and easily understood, seems almost too simple to be considered profound.

"The Aims of Education" spells out primary points in Whitehead's vision of education; but it does not, in itself, provide a complete picture of his educational theories. Accordingly, it should not be allowed to stand alone as a comprehensive view of Whiteheadian educational philosophy but must be considered alongside his other works, especially the two essays that follow it in the 1929 publication The Aims of Education and Other Essays. Those two works, "The Rhythm of Education," the address delivered to the Training College Association in 1922 and published that same year as a separate pamphlet, and "The Rhythmic Claims of Freedom and Discipline," the article published in the Hibbert Journal in 1923, are critical companion pieces for the student seeking a clear view of education according to Whitehead. They complete the picture Whitehead draws of his vision of education, providing in his concept of a rhythmic, cyclical educational process, a frame for teachers and teachers of teachers. The three essays, appearing over a span of seven years, together, form what might be considered the nucleus of process education and for that reason will be addressed together in detail after discussion of the remaining early works. It should be noted, however, that the presidential address of 1916, is, indeed, a major step in the development of Whitehead's educational vision: after "The Aims of Education" the foundation is now in place.

In January of 1917, Whitehead delivered his second presidential address to the Mathematical Association, choosing on this occasion as his major focus technical
education rather than the mathematics curriculum which he had examined the previous year. A look at the history of the time explains the vast shift in topic selection. At that time, World War I was still influencing and altering all aspects of societal functions, as well as highlighting the need for an educational system equipped to provide both a quality technical education and workers with strong technical skills. It is not surprising, therefore, that technical education was a grave concern to all, especially a university professor of mathematics whose son would a year later make the ultimate sacrifice for his country. In addition, as Lowe (1990) notes, Whitehead’s view that applied mathematics is as important as pure mathematics leads quite naturally to his high regard for the technical side of education. The precise title of the 1917 presidential address is “Technical Education and Its Relation to Science and Literature,” an appropriate title since that is quite precisely the essence of the work, a careful consideration of the proper relationship of all three aspects in the student’s curriculum. Whitehead argues in this address that although one of the three will naturally receive a primary emphasis in each student’s program of study, attention should also be given to the other two. He also asserts the value of a proper relationship of thought and action, as well as the necessity of action in abstract thinking. Whitehead (1929a) writes:

But the goal of such curiosity is the marriage of action to thought. This essential intervention of action even in abstract science is often overlooked. No man of science wants merely to know. He acquires knowledge to appease his passion for discovery. He does not discover in order to know, he knows in order to discover. The pleasure which art and science can give to toil is the enjoyment which arises from successfully directed intention. Also it is the same pleasure which is yielded to the scientist and the artist. (p. 48)

Whitehead makes it vividly clear in this address that an emphasis on action should be a prime concern of the teacher, another idea that will appear later in many and varied expressions.

Technical education is the primary focus of the address; however, like so many other of Whitehead’s writings, the address reaches beyond the primary focus toward greater truths, which in this case, point to some very basic principles in his educational doctrine as well. This attention to seeking veritable points important
to all is evident from the beginning of the address, where in the opening paragraphs Whitehead, the educator, sounds for a moment like Whitehead, the philosopher, expressing his belief in the necessity of framing one's ideals. Borrowing words from the dramatist Shaw to describe the ideal state of mankind, Whitehead (1929a) focuses his attention on the phrase which describes "a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life"; he then goes on to declare that "this is the ideal of technical education [although] it sounds very mystical . . ." (pp. 43-44). Whitehead reiterates in this address one of the foundational cornerstones of his educational philosophy, and a suggestion which must have been at that time, in the midst of a worldwide conflict, quite an unusual approach: joy through work. Utilizing the Benedictine monks who labored joyfully, he states:

... the essential idea remains, that work should be transfused with intellectual and moral vision and thereby turned into a joy, triumphing over its weariness and its pain. Each of us will re-state this abstract formulation in a more concrete shape in accordance with his private outlook. State it how you like, so long as you do not lose the main point in your details. However you phrase it, it remains the sole real hope of toiling humanity; and it is in the hands of technical teachers, and of those who control their spheres of activity, so to mould the nation that daily it may pass to its labours in the spirit of the monks of old. (p. 44)

An interesting, unique proposition, the idea that work should be infused with joy is not a new notion for Whitehead, but rather, a reinvention of one of the cardinal principles proposed in "The Aims of Education": that study should be a joyful activity for the child, or any student, for that matter. In many different places and in many different phrasings, this principle resounds as a primary feature of Whiteheadian educational philosophy.

Although Whitehead believed fervently in the element of joy in education, he also acknowledged the absolute "necessity for hard work and exact knowledge" (p. 143), as he so aptly phrased it in his next major educational paper "Science in General Education." Presented in 1921 to the Second Congress of Universities of the Empire, the essay argues that the early years of general education should encourage not only knowledge but also the formation of good study habits. Whitehead (1948) speaks of the need to avoid what he labels "the fallacy of the
soft option" (p. 142), the practice of confining a course to only the most interesting facts and broad generalizations, both highly ineffective without connections and application. Through his comments on the teaching of science, he discloses and details some of the principles that are prevalent throughout his writings on education: the need for practical application and the danger of teaching subjects as disconnected fragments. He mentions, as well, the importance of “relations,” imagination, and creativity, all ideas that constitute core elements of his yet-to-be-developed philosophy of process. The essay is rich in process thought, even though the theory is at this point driven by his practical deliberation of science education. Whitehead states, “It [science] should elicit the habit of first hand observation, and should train the pupil to relate general ideas to immediate perceptions, and thereby obtain exactness of observation and fruitfulness of thought” (p. 143). He speaks, at this point, from the mathematics/science perspective even as he moves toward the musings of the philosopher.

In 1923, one year before he migrated to America and the world of philosophy, Whitehead published “The Place of Classics in Education.” A work that probably evolved as a result of his membership on an educational committee appointed by the Prime Minister to examine the role of the classics in British education, the essay analyzes the teaching of Latin to children. Whitehead makes strong points for his conviction, stating first that a study of Latin “will develop the mind in the regions of logic, philosophy, history and of aesthetic apprehension of literary beauty” (1929a, p. 63). He then points to the possibilities for moral instruction, expressing his belief in the “greatness” of Rome and its citizens—their aims, their virtues, even their vices; for according to Whitehead, “Moral education is impossible apart from the habitual vision of greatness” (p. 69). Finally, he asserts that the major reason for a study of the classics is to teach “exactness, definiteness, and independent power of analysis—[these, in his opinion] are among the main prizes of the whole study” (p. 71).

The study of Latin is essential; that argument is quite obviously the theme of the essay. However, Whitehead also acknowledges the fact that the classics are in
danger, even stating early in the work that the study of the classics, as it was in the past, is "gone, and gone for ever" (p. 61). Although a classical scholar himself, Whitehead was also astute enough to recognize not only the changes that had taken place but also the prospects for increased changes in the future. He writes:

The history of mankind has yet to be set in its proper relation to the gathering momentum of technological advance. Within the last hundred years, a developed science has wedded itself to a developed technology and a new epoch has opened. (p. 73)

Whitehead obviously at this point is confronting the changes occurring in front of his very eyes, and as he watches, appears to be moving closer to a mode of thinking which will be the dominant one for the remainder of his life—process philosophy.

Life is about interconnections, he declares in this essay; moreover, those interconnections (in life and among lives) should be the basis as children are taught to relate and apply. Whitehead proposes:

We must utilise models, and pictures, and diagrams, and charts to exhibit typical examples of the growth of technology and its impact on the current modes of life. In the same way art, in its curious fusion with utility and with religion, both expresses the actual inward life of imagination and changes it by its very expression. The children can see the art of previous epochs in models and pictures, and sometimes the very objects in museums. The treatment of the history of the past must not start with generalised statements, but with concrete examples exhibiting the slow succession of period to period, and of mode of life to mode of life, and of race to race. (pp. 73-74)

A passage written years before *Process and Reality*, it calls to mind, for the Whiteheadian scholar, some of the central notions of process philosophy. The beginnings of the view of life "in process" and the "relations" that are so much a part of process thinking are evident here even as he speaks in the language of the teacher. These words were published in January of 1923, the year before Whitehead left England for Harvard; he is at this time still a professor of mathematics, but he is obviously a budding philosopher as well.

After Whitehead arrived at Harvard in 1924, he wrote no other essays on education, with the exception of the 1928 address "Universities and Their Function," which he delivered to a meeting of the American Association of the
Collegiate Schools of Business" and which focused on higher education issues rather than the concerns of the teacher in public schools. In this speech, which begins with commendation and acknowledgement of the importance of business schools in the university, he addresses goals and principles which apply to all schools and departments in the university setting. Whitehead maintains in this work that the purpose of a university goes beyond the traditional expectations of knowledge and research. As he expounds on this topic, he sounds very much like the educational theorist of the previous decade, speaking of excitement and life in the learning process, as well as the avoidance of isolated facts.

Also very prominent in this essay is the shift to philosophical concerns and the marked advance toward ideas which are prominent in process thinking. His concern with connections and imagination seem to be prophetic indications of the relations among the actual entities and the creative advance which will form his thinking about the theory of process and reality. He states:

The justification for a university is that it preserves the connection between knowledge and the zest of life, by uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning. The university imparts information, but it imparts it imaginatively. . . . This atmosphere of excitement, arising from imaginative consideration, transforms knowledge. A fact is no longer a bare fact: it is invested with all its possibilities. . . . Imagination is not to be divorced from the facts: it is a way of illuminating the facts. . . . Youth is imaginative, and if the imagination be strengthened by discipline this energy of imagination can in great measure be preserved through life. The tragedy of the world is that those who are imaginative have but slight experience, and those who are experienced have feeble imaginations. . . . The task of a university is to weld together imagination and experience. (p. 93)

The message is delivered from the perspective of the insightful university professor, concerned with the function and relationship of the university to the student and at the same time beginning a serious contemplation of universalities in learning and life. Whitehead proposes near the end of this address that "education is discipline for the adventure of life" [and very adamantly asserts that] there must always be a certain freshness in the knowledge dealt with . . . . It is the function of
the scholar to evoke into life wisdom and beauty which, apart from his magic, would remain lost in the past" (p. 98).

The early educational addresses, as well as this final one delivered after he had made the transition from mathematics professor to professor of philosophy, all contain valuable insight and perspectives necessary in a careful consideration and interpretation of Whitehead's educational thinking; in addition, passages relating to learning and the learner are interspersed throughout several of his important philosophical works. The last chapter of Science and the Modern World, for example, is a wealth of knowledge on Whitehead's educational views; and even in the philosophical masterpiece Process and Reality can be found sections relating to educational theories. However, the greatest source of information regarding Whitehead's thinking on education and the ones to which the serious student of Whitehead must return again and again are the three essays which Whitehead makes the first three chapters in the 1929 publication The Aims of Education and Other Essays. Those writings---"The Aims of Education," "The Rhythm of Education," and "The Rhythmic Claims of Freedom and Discipline"---relate the essence of Whitehead's philosophy of education: what learning should be and how to go about framing it. Because they provide a clear explanation and clarification of the most important points of Whitehead's educational writings, they will form the basis of the following exploration of Whitehead's vision of education.

A Vision of Education

Lowe (1990) advises the beginning Whitehead reader interested primarily in Whitehead's educational views to look first at Aims of Education and Other Essays before going to the more complex works, suggesting them as a starting point because they are clear, direct, and written in a style vastly different from his philosophical treatises. He, like many other scholars, finds the philosopher's writings on education much easier to read and comprehend than the often complex philosophical writings. Henry W. Holmes (1941), however, suggests exactly the opposite; he tells the reader to look first at the philosophic works, specifically...
Adventures of Ideas, Religion in the Making, Symbolism, and The Function of Reason. It is his opinion that to gain a thorough appreciation of Whitehead's educational philosophy, one must go first to works which will provide a basic understanding of his philosophical views. He writes:

Viewed in the light of his constructive philosophic thought, [Aims of Education] is the only statement of [Whitehead's] educational theory; but it must be taken as reflective of his general theory of life. And this is true in spite of the fact that his greater systematic works followed after his essays on education. When he wrote on education, his more general interpretation of life and nature must have been at work in his mind: at any rate, I can discover no inconsistency between the two. (pp. 632-633)

Like others who have gleaned process philosophy from the lines (and sometimes from between the lines) of the process educational writings, Holmes sees the early signs of a theory "in process" first as it buds forth, later as it advances and begins to bloom. As stated earlier, the two streams of thought are interconnected--related, as Whitehead would say; therefore, to know and understand one realm of thinking, one needs also to know and understand the other. With this in mind, therefore, and having addressed in Chapter 3 the primary points of process philosophy, the purpose of the following analysis is a careful consideration of the purely educational principles of Alfred North Whitehead.

The trilogy of essays which Whitehead presents as the first three in the widely known The Aims of Education and Other Essays, although written at different times and for different occasions, offer clear explanation and clarification of the vital points of his educational thinking. Individually, they are significant and informative; together, they provide a dynamic composite of the two basic premises of his process education thought: (1) the aims of education must be centered around learning that is "alive" and (2) education should be viewed as a process which he defines as the "rhythm of education." These are the foundational thoughts out of which process educational philosophy developed, and although not sufficient in themselves for a complete and thorough understanding, they provide an excellent starting point.
In the Preface to the collection *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (1929a), Whitehead makes a statement which capsulizes a key--a salient--point in his educational philosophy. He writes:

> The students are alive, and the purpose of education is to stimulate and guide their self-development. It follows as a corollary from this premiss, that the teachers also should be alive with living thoughts. The whole book is a protest against dead knowledge, that is to say, against inert ideas. (p. v.)

This protest becomes a recurrent theme in Whitehead's essays and addresses; for the notion of knowledge as a collection of "inert ideas"--i.e., "ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilised, or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations" (p. 1)--is to Whitehead an abominable concept. To do this, he explains, relegates the mind to the role of an instrument that must first be sharpened and then used, the traditional (but ineffective) approach to learning. The fact that such an incorrect theory and practice has for centuries not only survived but also prospered shocks and baffles Whitehead, and he admits in the essay that he has no idea who or where it came from. He labels it "a radical error which bids air to stifle the genius of the modern world [and vehemently denounces] it as one of the most fatal, erroneous, and dangerous conceptions ever introduced into the theory of education" (p. 6). Lowe (1990), recognizing and understanding through years of study the intensity of Whitehead's feelings about the dangers of dead ideas and dead knowledge, suggests that a very appropriate title for the unpublished educational writings would have been "A Protest against Inert Ideas" (p. 47). In many writings and in many different ways, Whitehead emphasizes his belief in a living, breathing knowledge but never, perhaps, more fervently than in this very famous early essay.

Whitehead begins "The Aims of Education" (1929a) with the often quoted statement: "Culture is activity of thought, and receptiveness to beauty and humane feeling"; and with that as his starting point differentiates between the man who is merely knowledgeable and the man who possesses "both culture and expert knowledge" (p. 1). Calling on teachers to encourage self-development rather than
the pursuit of "scraps of information" (p. 1), he continues to stress the living, active qualities of both the learner and the learning process. This he bases on his conception of the mind, which he reminds us "is never passive; it is a perpetual activity, delicate, receptive, responsive to stimulus. You cannot postpone its life until you have sharpened it" (p. 6). There must be connections and excitement for the student along the way—as he sharpens his brain, not after he sharpens it. The mind is living; the child is living. Therefore, the teacher and the knowledge must also be filled with life—immediately, not tomorrow. In an appeal filled with a sense of urgency he insists:

Whatever interest attaches to your subject-matter must be evoked here and now; whatever powers you are strengthening in the pupil, must be exercised here and now; whatever possibilities of mental life your teaching should impart, must be exhibited here and now. That is the golden rule of education, and a very difficult rule to follow. (p. 5)

In this way, the learning process will acquire the "alive-ness" so vital to its success.

Whitehead also dispenses early in "The Aims of Education" the advice that too much knowledge is as dangerous as dead knowledge. He recommends, "We enunciate two educational commandments, 'Do not teach too many subjects,' and again, 'What you teach, teach thoroughly' " (p. 2). Failure to do this, he thinks, will lead to disconnected ideas, which will eventually result in boredom, drudgery, and the inactivity of the "inert ideas." Always, Whitehead maintains, the student should be filled with excitement, joy, and life, which will occur if the subject matter is exciting, joyful, and living. Too many subjects and too many facts lead to dead facts. The ideas introduced to the student should be "few and important, and . . . thrown into every combination possible" (p. 2); and the emphasis should be on the connections and interconnections among them, a basic educational concept and one at the heart of process philosophy as well. Whitehead explains:

From the very beginning of his education, the child should experience the joy of discovery. The discovery which he has to make, is that general ideas give an understanding of that great stream of events which pours through his life, which is his life. . . . Pedants sneer at an education that is useful. But if education is not useful, what is it? . . . education should be useful, whatever your aim in life. (p. 2)
Living facts in a living mind lead quite naturally to useful applications and ultimately to an understanding of the importance of the relationships in life—and the generalizations which are so critical in Whitehead's rhythm of education. This is the discovery the student must be allowed and encouraged to make.

The second principle essential in the learning of a child is Whitehead's theory of the rhythm of education, which he proposes and explains in two essays: one, entitled "The Rhythm of Education"; the other, entitled "The Rhythmic Claims of Freedom and Discipline." Published a year apart, the essays provide an accurate picture of the theory many scholars consider to be his most important contribution to modern educational thinking—the theory that learning occurs, or should occur, in cyclical stages. According to Whitehead (1929a), "The principle is merely this—that different subjects and modes of study should be undertaken by pupils at fitting times when they have reached the proper stage of mental development" (p. 15). This is the natural progression. Learning occurs best in this way; yet it has not been approached in this manner by either the theorists or the practitioners. Whitehead, therefore, proposes a look at education through three specific stages.

Those very famous stages are the stages of romance, precision, and generalization; and they each play a critical role in the cycle, which, like Whitehead's philosophy of process, is unending. Once started, in very much the same way the actual entity moves toward concrescence, the rhythmic cycle never ceases. In fact, each of the stages can be "related" to the stages in the life of an actual entity. Each stage is, however, a separate phase with very specific attributes and purposes; and no one of them can stand alone. Again, in the words of the process philosopher, they "require" each other. Essentially, Whitehead derives his theory of cyclical stages from the fact that this is, simply, the most natural way of thinking. "Life is essentially periodic" (p. 17), he asserts; it consists daily, weekly, yearly of cycles—work, sleep, play are all cyclical functions. It is his firm conviction that learning should also be viewed as a natural life cycle.

The first stage is called the stage of romance, or, as Whitehead describes it, "the stage of apprehension" (p. 17). This phase, in the learning process, is the
period of excitement, awe, and wonder, when the topic or the subject to be studied offers the opportunity for adventure. Whitehead says this period “holds within itself unexplored connexions with possibilities half-disclosed by glimpses and half-concealed by the wealth of material” (p. 16). The student, intrigued with exciting expectations and seeking to know more, reaches out, just as the prehension reaches out to grasp that experience from the past to make it a part of the present. The stage of romance, because of its role at the origin of the process, is critical. In fact, in “The Rhythmic Claims of Freedom and Discipline,” Whitehead (1929a) claims that success or failure may very well rest here in this first stage. He states:

> It is my strong belief that the cause of so much failure in the past has been due to the lack of careful study of the due place of romance. Without the adventure of romance, at the best you get inert knowledge without initiative, and at the worst you get contempt of ideas—without knowledge. (p. 33)

Whitehead also asserts his belief that during this first stage children should be provided guidance but at the same time allowed freedom to see and act on their own. Certainly, he says, “in no part of education can you do without discipline or can you do without freedom; but in the stage of romance the emphasis must always be on freedom . . . (p. 33).

The stage of romance leads quite naturally to the second stage, the stage of precision. Corresponding to the period in the life of the actual entity characterized by chaos and adjustment, this is the period of preciseness and exactness and is characterized by attention to detail and the “less romantic” traits of the first period. At first glance the stage of precision appears to be more tedious and less exciting than the romantic stage, which is not the case if the stage of romance has truly occurred. In fact, if the student is excited and in awe of his study, the precision in the second stage will also be a joy. Whitehead remarks:

> It is evident that a stage of precision is barren without a previous stage of romance: unless there are facts which have already been vaguely apprehended in their broad generality, the previous analysis is an analysis of nothing . . . The facts of romance have disclosed ideas with possibilities of wide significance, and in the
stage of precise progress we acquire other facts in a systematic order, which thereby form both a disclosure and an analysis of the general subject-matter of the romance. (p. 19)

The emphasis in the precision stage is on a systematic scheme through which basic knowledge is acquired, e.g., the rules of grammar and the theorems of geometry, as well as their analysis and application. Whitehead says this stage “is the time for pushing on, for knowing the subject exactly, and for retaining in the memory its salient features” (p. 34), emphasizing at the same time, however, that the rules and the theorems should never be studied as ends in themselves. Always the child should use and apply the knowledge acquired in practical situations. According to Whitehead, if the stage of romance has occurred properly and successfully, the stage of precision will require little discipline. The children will know what is required of them, will work diligently, and will move smoothly into the next stage of the rhythm of education.

The final stage in Whitehead’s rhythm is the stage of generalization, “the fruition which has been the goal of the precise training. It is the final success” (p. 19). Generalization occurs last, but it is definitely not the end; rather, it is a return to the beginning, “to romanticism with added advantage of classified ideas and relevant technique” (p. 19). The student at this point possesses the tools necessary to move on to greater quests—to move, in a sense, to a higher level of challenges and achievements. He has acquired a level of mastery that will enable him to push toward even greater truths. Whitehead describes it thus in the following passage from “The Rhythmic Claims of Freedom and Discipline”:

We have now come to the third stage of the rhythmic cycle, the stage of generalisation. There is here a reaction towards romance. Something definite is now known; aptitudes have been acquired; and general rules are clearly apprehended both in their formulation and their detailed exemplification. The pupil now wants to use his new weapons. He is an effective individual, and it is effects that he wants to produce. (p. 37)

Generalization, the final stage, brings one round once again to the beginning; it enables the process to begin again, the excitement and joy of fruition evolving into the excitement and joy of romance. This final stage corresponds with the stage of
satisfaction in the life of the actual entity; this is the actual entity in its burst of glory, the moment of becoming—a most appropriate metaphor for the student in that moment of achievement—joy and fruition! And after the momentary pulse, the process begins again, but on a higher plane, with expectations of greater joy and greater accomplishments.

Like the process of life, the learning process is an unending cycle. The rhythm is divided into three stages and each is a separate phase; however, Whitehead warns against too much emphasis on the divisions. In “The Rhythm of Education” he writes:

> My second caution is to ask you not to exaggerate into sharpness the distinction between the three stages of a cycle. . . . Of course, I mean throughout a distinction of emphasis, of pervasive quality—romance, precision, generalisation, are all present throughout. But there is an alternation of dominance, and it is this alternation which constitutes the cycles. (pp. 27-28)

Whitehead places great emphasis on the cyclical nature of the rhythm of education, a trait Lowe (1990) describes as “the plurality of cycles, cycles early and late, cycles within cycles, cycles in phase and out of phase with one another” (p. 61). In no circumstance would Whitehead encourage three separate phases, individual and apart from each other, beginning with romance and ceasing with generalization. On the contrary, once started, it never ends. In speaking on the cyclic nature of the process, he asserts, “We should banish the idea of a mythical, far-off end of education. The pupils must be continually enjoying some fruition and starting afresh . . . “ (p. 19). This is the essence of Whitehead’s vision of education, not an easy task he readily admits, but one which must be undertaken—and with wonder and a spirit of romance, Whitehead believes it is possible.

**Opinions of the Critics**

The critique of Whitehead’s educational writings has been extensive, although Lowe (1960) points out that Whitehead’s influence on educational practices in his own country was slight as compared to the influence his writings have had in the United States. *The Aims of Education*, he tells us, was widely read and appreciated by American educators from the time of its appearance and was
an inspiration to many teachers. Likewise, through the years many educational theorists and practitioners, as well as philosophers, have written and made critical comment on the educational works. Although Whitehead's rhythm of education has been the area most frequently addressed, other aspects of his educational philosophy have also received attention, including the relevance of process thinking in contemporary educational practice, Whitehead's theory of the living student and living knowledge, his insistence that practical application be a part of the learning process, and the relationship between Whitehead's philosophy of process and his philosophy of education.

The impact of Whitehead's view of a rhythm of education spans the twentieth century. Henry Holmes, in 1941, calls the rhythmical cycles "striking and sound" (p. 638), and sounding very much like a present day teacher, expresses his belief that child-centered advocates and teachers should read Whitehead. Nearly half a century later, Brian Hendley (1986), labels the rhythm of education the great philosopher's "most famous contribution to educational thought" (p. 95). Like many other teachers, he sees great possibilities for both learning and instruction in the theory of three cyclical stages. Believing strongly in their potential, Hendley (1976) proposes the rhythmic stages as a model in the introductory philosophy classroom. It should be noted, however, that Hendley, like most Whiteheadian educators, favors a model, not a method. Lowe (1990) makes note of Whitehead's opposition to the idea of a rigid formula, reminding us that Whitehead never intended to "[advocate] a method that could be learned and applied on schedule by any teacher to any group of pupils" (p. 62). And most educational theorists and practitioners agree; there is much to be gained from applying the cyclical process of learning in the real world of the classroom as a model, or a framework.

Whitehead emphasizes the importance of the plurality of the cycles, making it clear at all times that each of the stages is critical to the success of the others. He avoids labeling one as the most important. Through the years, however, others have applied their own interpretation, with some critics placing what appears to be
a more critical role on the final stage of the rhythm, the stage of generalization. Brumbaugh (1982) is one of these. An educational philosopher with great interest in Whiteheadian thought, Brumbaugh devotes an entire chapter of his important work *Whitehead, Process Philosophy, and Education* to the final stage of generalization, which he equates with the final phase of concrescence, the satisfaction of the actual entity. In this chapter, entitled “Knowing: Whitehead’s Third Stage,” Brumbaugh considers the elements necessary for the student to achieve the fruition of the final stage of learning. This achievement, he asserts, “is the student’s seeing as an interesting single whole the qualitative and structural details he or she has examined one by one” (p. 117); and although he does not use the term *synthesis*, the picture he presents is an accurate depiction of the synthesizing process. In a most appropriate metaphor, he imparts the critical role that generalization, or the satisfaction, plays in the learning cycle:

> I once compared an educational system with no moments of satisfaction to a monotonous super-highway. It is a road with no points of interest and with changes of velocity only at the toll-booths set along the way. The student turns off, not because he has come to any selected destination, but just because he can no longer afford to pay the toll. (pp. 119-120)

A vivid clarification of the prominent part satisfaction plays in the learning process, Brumbaugh's comparison points to the romantic aspects of the first stage which are also very much a part of the final stage as it rolls over into that stage of romance again.

William Doll is a post-modern process thinker who also finds great meaning in the three stages of the rhythm of education, and who, like Brumbaugh, places great importance on the final stage of generalization. In *A Post-modern Perspective on Curriculum* (1993), he explores the transformative power Whitehead posits as inherent in the proper interplay of his three stages of learning: romance, precision, and generalization. This last point—the transformative power inherent in Whitehead’s concept of curriculum—is often overlooked but holds, [he believes], the greatest developmental potential of any of his curriculum ideas. (pp. 145-146)
Doll's proposal that the interplay among the three stages is potentially transformative is an intriguing one and directs the process educator quite logically to a closer consideration of the transformation which occurs in the final stage. In this consideration, it is worthy of note that Whitehead himself implies a closer relation between generalization and romance than between either of the other two relations. He says, for example, in "The Rhythmic Claims of Freedom and Discipline," that "romance is in the background" during the precision stage whereas in the generalization stage there is "a reaction towards romance" (pp. 34, 36). Once again, we see the "requiring of each other" of which Whitehead writes, this time by two of the stages, each poised at critical points in the cyclical process and each integral to the powerful interconnections that occur in the process. Bennett (1998), another Whiteheadian philosopher, also alludes to the necessary linkage of romance and generalization, stating that

probably the next best way to extinguish excitement is to downplay or omit the stage of generalization—the return to novel experience with the aid of precision and technique, interpreting life through the expansion, application and testing of concepts previously acquired. . . . Both romance and generalization are ways of honoring and extending the patterns of connectedness that undergird our lives. (p. 58)

Going a step beyond Bennett and Brumbaugh, Doll (personal conference, June 29, 1999) poses the possibility that, perhaps, the greatest opportunity for meaningful application of the rhythm of education rests within this last phase as it, in the words of Whitehead (1929a), "relapses into the discursive adventures of the romantic stage" (p. 37). As Lawrence (1987) so aptly phrases it, the stage of generalization possesses "a kind of transcendence which carries with it a new excitement and the adventure of discovery. It becomes a romantic phase of its own" (p. 231). It appears possible after a closer analysis that the stage of generalization might, indeed, be considered the beacon for a true understanding of the possibilities of Whitehead's process vision of education.

As significant as the rhythms are, other areas have also captured the interests of critics of Whitehead. One of the most important is the relevancy of
Whitehead’s philosophy to the educational issues facing today’s theorists, college professors, teachers, and administrators. The general consensus among process educators is that Whiteheadian philosophy offers great insight into concerns of both learning and teaching, as well as a model on which to found useful, meaningful reform. This model is versatile (or as Whitehead would term it, “useful”) and easily adapted to different situations. It fits the classroom teacher, as seen by Karen McDaniel’s (1998) application to the high school classroom and Ellen Schwartz’s (1998) application in the elementary classroom; and it fits equally well a holistic approach to learning, as proposed by Ron Miller (1998) and Hillel Schiller (1998).

Additionally, Whitehead’s process thought intrigues the university professor. This is seen in the link Steve Mashalidis (1998) makes between Heraclitus and Whitehead and the model proposed by George Allan (1996) in his “communities of inquiry.” Allan sums up very well the “aim” and the “general scheme” shared by today’s process thinker:

As process educators, we should teach a curriculum that rejects the modernist attempt to sanctify the canon and at the same time rejects the post-modernist insistence that there should be no canon at all. We want our students to learn about the wondrous capacity of human beings to create frameworks as tools for understanding and dealing with their world. We want to teach students both to respect those creations and to question them. We want to teach students how to make the old world into a better one. (p. 27)

Process philosophy does, indeed, appeal to a range of thinkers and educators. In his recent work *Whitehead and Philosophy of Education* (1998), Malcolm Evans capsulizes the thinking of many with his suggestion that

Whitehead’s process philosophy offers a breadth and depth that can be a much-needed foundation for educational practice ... from which we may begin the search for appropriate questions and for guidance toward the answers one seeks. His views on education ... hold much promise ... That promise is rooted in his philosophy of organism, a process philosophy. (p. 89)

Moore (1998) agrees and in her work *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method*, which both relates Whitehead to education and examines a Whiteheadian approach toward education, goes a step further and declares that a
fuller development of Whitehead's process educational theories is needed. According to Moore, Whitehead's philosophy is a rich source for educators because his vision allows one to see not only strengths and weaknesses but also a means for making improvements. Although primarily focused toward religious education, Moore's suggestions are a powerful statement in support of the relevancy of Whitehead's vision of education.

A final and very important assessment of Whitehead's relevancy is Brumbaugh's *Whitehead, Process Philosophy, and Education* (1982), a work essential in a complete analysis of Whiteheadian educational thought. In this work Brumbaugh explores and applies Whitehead's thinking in key areas: space, concreteness, and time. He addresses first the inaccuracy of the idea of space as an insulator, asserting that the more correct view is the notion "that persons are not isolated in the way solid particles seem to be" (p. 3). In applying this to the classroom, Brumbaugh advises:

> We must stop thinking about learning and teaching with models that identify students with stupid particles and classroom space with an insulating vacuum. We must consider the content we are teaching as well, so that we do not indoctrinate our students with a misguided savage individualism that the mistaking of classical physics for metaphysics made us believe to be realistic. (pp. 3-4)

He next focuses on the mistake that education has made since classical time of placing too much emphasis on "abstractions--numbers, names, mental discipline [which though essential] . . . is exactly the opposite pole from the unique appreciation that gives an aesthetic quality to concrete encounter" (p. 4). Whitehead is suggesting, Brumbaugh proposes, that a greater appreciation of concrete things should be as important an aim as intellectual discipline.

Brumbaugh's final focus, and the one he considers most significant, is the relation of learning and time. He explains that the concept of time, according to process metaphysics, is "dynamic, directed, irreversible, and taking place in successive phases" (p. 4); and he suggests that concept as the correct one for the learning process. Brumbaugh looks to process philosophy to explain his educational application:
For very small, particle-sized events, these "phases of concrescence" constitute the life of each event; and they must occur in fixed order. There is an initial encounter of some kind; a phase of readjustment which is unstable; and a final stabilization that marks the end of that event. For more complex entities, including persons and civilizations, an analogous rule holds. If learning is to be an integral part of a student's existence and growth, it must follow the three-stage pattern in which growth and concrescence take place... romance, precision, and generalization or satisfaction. (p. 4)

According to Brumbaugh, the monumental mistake through the years in education revolves around the failure to follow this sequential process. Too often teachers begin with precision and neglect the natural order. Brumbaugh's application of Whitehead's metaphysics to educational theory has been widely read by students of process educational thought; like Brumbaugh, they agree that the writings of Whitehead are applicable and extremely relevant in today's educational environment.

Whitehead's focus on students' self-development is still another concern of Whiteheadian scholars because this is the principle he calls "the one fundamental principle of education" (qtd. in Lowe, 1990, p. 46). Lowe tells us it is also one which Whitehead claims derived solely from his own experience. Although others (e.g., Dewey, Herbart, and Rousseau) were proposing similar theories at the time, Whitehead never makes any reference to them. He is content to outline in his essays and addresses the best approach to meaningful reform through his own contemplations. A primary concern is that students make use of their knowledge, a point he emphasizes when he writes that "education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge" (1929a, p. 4). This statement, according to Lowe (1990), is the closest Whitehead ever gets to a formal definition of education. Hendley, too, sees the use of knowledge of supreme importance to Whitehead and agrees there are similarities between Whitehead's thinking and Dewey's thinking, specifically Whitehead's proposal that the only proper subject matter for education is Life. Hendley (1986) makes note, as well, that

Whitehead seems to be correctly emphasizing the need to connect the subject matter of the curriculum to life. This is not to say that all subjects have to be shown to have an immediate practical outcome,
but they can each be seen as contributing to our understanding of life. And what, he might ask, could be more useful than that? The overall aim of education should be to establish such a connection. (p. 86)

Once again, connections are key elements if students are to acquire a knowledge that will continue to benefit them as they move through life.

An important connection is the application of knowledge in the real world, a tenet critics view as prominent in Whitehead’s theory of education. A primary concern of Whitehead, it is a theme, in fact, that he pinpoints in the very early mathematical addresses and which he continues to weave throughout his educational essays and speeches. In the opinion of Lowe (1990), the idea is central in Whitehead’s thinking on technical education, which he viewed as “an ingredient in the complete development of ideal human beings; there should be something that one knows well, and something that one can do well” (p. 55).

Hendley (1986) considers this focus unique as well as important, noting the irony of “this English mathematician with the gentleman’s education who advocates so strongly that all students be exposed to technical education” (p. 87). Hendley proposes that Whitehead’s beliefs in connecting “headwork” and “handiwork” and combining thought and action evolve from his belief that these connections would be effective means of eliminating inert ideas. He notes, as well, the similarities between Whitehead’s thinking and Dewey’s thinking on this aspect of education:

He shares with Dewey a respect for the vocational, as well as the technological, side of education and is equally disdainful of the isolation of different subject matters from one another and from life itself. The need to develop both thought and action is a frequent refrain in his educational writings. (p. 88)

Interest in the practical side of education is very much a part of Whitehead the educator and, according to Hendley, may be the reason present day educators find his ideas applicable today. Whitehead participated on numerous national and local education committees and spoke extensively as an ardent educational reformer, concerned with theory but at the same time interested in what was really going on in the schools. Hendley professes a strong belief that Whitehead’s interest was more than the participation required of his professional duties; he says,
"I believe that in the same way as did Dewey and Russell, Whitehead sought to put his educational ideas into practice and that, in turn, his practical experiences served to modify and amplify the ideas" (p. 79). Dunkel (1965), however, disagrees, maintaining that undue importance should not be placed on Whitehead's participation on numerous boards and committees. He believes that involvement was simply a result of Whitehead's scholarly interest in education from the perspective of the university professor. This may or may not have been the motive; but whatever the reason, both Lowe and Hendley suggest that as a committee member he was conscientious and dedicated, and although not a great many details are available as to his precise involvement, they report that Whitehead was generally viewed as a courteous, agreeable man of few words. His involvement in affairs of educational practicality are most significant to Hendley because of the relation he sees between the theorist and the practitioner. Hendley writes:

I see his practical involvement as an attempt to utilize what he said and wrote about education, to make it less recondite, to test his ideas. There are no radical changes apparent in his educational views as a result of this practical experience, but there is a widening of outlook and a more concrete concern for the problems of teaching and learning which can be seen through the course of his writings. He would certainly share Dewey's animosity toward those who merely pontificate about education without getting involved. (p. 101)

Whitehead, the educator, plays a powerful role in the character of Whitehead, the philosopher.

As a philosopher who evolved from an educator, Whitehead possesses, perhaps, a unique perspective of the role of the teacher, another topic of interest to critics and students of Whitehead who attempt to discover in the essays some of the traits of effective teaching. This is a difficult task, however, because just as Whitehead's philosophy is always "a general way of proceeding [with] the specific details . . . left to the particular teacher in his or her own situation" (Hendley, 1986, p. 96), so also is his portrait of the teacher. Some of the elements most often noted are the ones stressed by Whitehead in his discussions on the aims of education. Others who have considered Whitehead's description of the teacher
have looked at the teacher through the frame of the rhythm of education. Brumbaugh (1982), for example, sees the teacher in all stages of Whitehead's rhythm, stating that the "role of the teacher involves transmitting motivation, precise symbolic presentation, and planning for eventual generalization" (p. 97). He notes, as well, the importance of the motivational role of the teacher in promoting "internal" learning, which both Plato and Whitehead see as different from "external" learning. This is significant when viewed from the Whiteheadian perspective because it is internal, not external, motivation that is so critical in the stage of romance and that connects with the desire to achieve the self-realization occurring in the last stage of generalization. Likewise, Hendley (1986) views the teacher as the personification of the three stages of rhythmic growth: romantic enthusiasm for the subject (which Whitehead hopes will prove to be contagious); mastery of the techniques of precise analysis; the ability to deal with general principles, to rise above rules and details and actively utilize ideas" (p. 98).

Lawrence (1987), assuming a more philosophical stance, believes the central notion can be located in the double function of the teacher. "It is for him [the teacher] to elicit the enthusiasm by resonance," says Whitehead, "from his own personality, and to create the environment of a larger knowledge and a firmer purpose. . . . The ultimate motive power, alike in science, in morality, and in religion, is the sense of value, the sense of importance." (p. 233)

In this passage, the enthusiasm of the teacher appears to be a primary function; however, Lawrence warns against too much emphasis on the word enthusiasm and an interpretation that the teacher should assume the role of simply a zealous entertainer. On the contrary, he explains, the emphasis should be on the verb elicit, which can be traced to Plato and to Socrates who considered himself a spiritual midwife, and to the role of the teacher as a creative agent. Lawrence emphasizes that Whitehead says nothing about creating enthusiasm. Indeed, what is elicited is to be regarded as already there, awaiting release. But that's only the first phase. It is, in fact, a special case of the first burst of creativity in the birth of an actual occasion. Beyond that burst
comes the teacher's creative role, "... to create the environment of a larger knowledge and a firmer purpose." (p. 234)

But once again Lawrence warns against too much emphasis on provision by the teacher of the knowledge or purpose; the focus Whitehead intends is on the students. According to Lawrence, "The emphasis on internal relations is unmistakable" and is clearly evident in Whitehead's insistence that "the principle of progress is from within: the discovery is made by ourselves, the discipline is self-discipline, and the fruition is the outcome of our own initiative" (p. 234). In this passage Whiteheadian educational theory sounds very much like Whiteheadian philosophy.

A final concern of critics is the theory developed by William Doll in his study of Whitehead's cosmology (personal conference, June 29, 1999), which is also a connection Lawrence (1987) makes, that "the parallel between the educational theory and the metaphysical synthesis is very close" (p. 235). One must not be considered or studied without the other because of the interrelatedness of the two. Lawrence sees specific correlations between the progress of the actual occasion toward fruition and the progress of the student toward generalization. Of even greater interest, however, is Lawrence's opinion of the magnitude of the earlier educational writings. He states:

The themes of the educational lectures are not merely intimations of metaphysical conceptions; they are also workshops for ideas that ultimately break through the limitations of their educational intent. ... The ferment lies in the readily accessible educational writings. The humane vocabulary of "mental," "feeling," "prehension," experience," "grasping," "satisfaction," "inheritance," to name only a few, are necessary for his later philosophy. Each identifies an important educational concept. (p. 232)

Only a few have made this explicit a statement regarding the connections between the metaphysical and the educational--between the metaphysician and the teacher. But the relationship is too integral to both to be ignored. A general perception of each is possible without acquaintance with the other, but an understanding of both is essential to appreciate fully the magnitude of the two bodies of works.
An understanding of the interrelatedness of the two realms of thought is the guiding light to the wisdom that resides in the connections between Whitehead, the process philosopher, and Whitehead, the teacher. As that light points the way, the limitless possibilities unfold for the teacher—an "alive-ness" in the learning process, a rhythm to sustain it, self-development and growth. And once again, in Whiteheadian fashion—application is the key. Whitehead instructs us to get our knowledge and use it. Apply it—in this case, to the practical world of the teacher, the classroom—and then move to the next stage and to greater truths. It is to a practical application, therefore, that I turn in the final phase of this study; and because that is the place where I am most comfortable, I approach this stage—as I have every other—with a return to "romance" and a sense of wonder that this, perhaps, will be the greatest quest of all.

End Notes

13. This first essay "The Place of Mathematics in a Liberal Education" is included in Essays in Science and Philosophy, published in 1948. It is not included in The Aims of Education and Other Essays (1929).


15. The essay "The Mathematical Curriculum" is included in both The Organisation of Thought, Educational and Scientific and The Aims of Education and Other Essays.

16. See Chapter I, entitled "The Ideal Opposites," in Part V, entitled "Final Interpretation," of Process and Reality for an example of education interconnected with a philosophical discussion. Whitehead writes here of training and imagination: "The paradox which wrecks so many promising theories of education is that the training which produces skill is so very apt to stifle imaginative zest. Skill demands repetition, and imaginative zest is tinged with impulse" (p. 338).

17. An interesting perspective from the late 1960s is found in Harold Dunkel's article "Free Romance!" published in the Elementary School Journal of 1967. Dunkel expresses concern that the spirit of romance is being neglected and makes a plea for more emphasis on romance in the classrooms of that day.

18. See also John Bennett's essay in the Teachers College Record in which he proposes Whitehead as a framework for a "liberal education." He writes, "It is not simple unimaginative assimilation of past orderings, but immersion in them in order to transcend them. It is good Whiteheadian doctrine that what and who we..."
are depends on how we become, and that this in turn is in good part a function of how our past enables us” (p. 339); ultimately, the goal is “insight into the full human experience” (p. 340).

19. Process Papers, which is subtitled An Occasional Publication of the Association for Process Philosophy of Education provides diverse perspectives of process education, ranging from philosophers to practitioners, and offers valuable insight to the beginning process thinker.


21. Another way to look at this, Hendley suggests, is as a pattern which evolves through the three stages of freedom, discipline, and finally greater freedom.
CHAPTER 5

THEORY AND PRACTICE:
APPLICATION OF PROCESS PHILOSOPHY TO THE CLASSROOM

In the short piece “Autobiographical Notes,” Whitehead (1948) compresses a lifetime of thinking about the tasks of teaching and learning into a succinct but broad, generalizing statement: He writes:

The education of a human being is a most complex topic, which we have hardly begun to understand. The only point on which I feel certain is that there is no widespread, simple solution. We have to consider the particular problem set to each institution by its type of students, and their future opportunities. (p. 9)

Written late in life, the words convey Whitehead’s certainty that the task of the educator is a formidable one. The words express also a central feature of a Whiteheadian approach to education: one formula that will fix and fit all does not exist; there simply is no set of instructions which will ensure successful learning and teaching for all students and all teachers in every situation. Although Whitehead’s writings on education are extensive, at no time in any of his addresses or written works does he propose a specific set of guidelines or a prescriptive method delineating his philosophy of education. Rather, in a manner similar to the general scheme he offers in *Process and Reality*, Whitehead proposes key principles. He then uses those key principles, or critical points, as a frame to illuminate his educational vision, clarifying without prescribing, and leaving it to the individual educator, thinker, or student to fill in the spaces with more precise, distinctive details.

Through the years educators have pored over Whitehead’s educational writings, seeking insight into his fundamental beliefs on education, most specifically the correct process of learning and teaching. And through the years the general consensus has remained essentially the same: the works of Whitehead offer a wealth of wise, practical, and timely advice to the teacher and the learner; however, no precise statement of philosophy has been extracted from the many sage, useful, and quotable comments. Likewise, no one best method of application has been derived to put into practice the theories and suggestions he offers; and although the teachers and the theorists continue to probe, all that ever appears is
the core of basic principles woven in and out of his works. In the manner of numerous other students of process educational thought, I too have searched for the most efficient means of applying process philosophy to the classroom. I now think the search has been misdirected—useful but misdirected.

As I consider my initial venture into The Aims of Education and my subsequent adventure into process philosophy, I realize the long, cyclical journey has brought me back to my starting point—to what I did not understand at the time is, perhaps, one of the most unique combinations of theory and practical advice ever written on the subject of learning and teaching. Whitehead, the theorist and philosopher, communicates with Whitehead, the practitioner. They communicate, they cooperate, and they operate in the same world. Just as we cannot isolate the philosophy from the educational works, neither can we separate the philosopher from the practitioner. This, I think, is a salient point to be considered in seeking a means of application.

Whitehead believed fervently in application of knowledge; his life and his personal application of process philosophy are testimony to that essential fact. He believed also in the correct and timely application of detail and generalities. In "The Education of an Englishman," Whitehead (1948) writes, "We think in generalities, but we live in detail. To make the past live, we must perceive it in detail in addition to thinking of it in generalities" (p. 26). In this passage, Whitehead is speaking directly to the role of the past in one's recollections, but the implications for his thinking on the relationship between generalities and detail, which is very much a core principle of his entire cosmological scheme, are prodigious. As noted in the section of scholarly comment on his work, generalization is, in the opinion of many, a (if not the) crucial point in the philosophy of process education. The metaphorical implication for the teacher who is a process thinker—that thinking and living are as interconnected as the philosopher and the teacher or the theorist and the practitioner—is crucial as well. The philosopher/teacher link and the theorist/practitioner link are both essential.
The philosophy is a reflection of the teacher person; indeed, the person is the beginning. I believe, now, that a useful practical application will stem from a detailed connection to Whitehead, the person; and that such an application, proceeding from Whitehead's teacher persona through his core principles toward generalization, will lead quite naturally to a significant, meaningful personal application. The following application, therefore, will be founded on that premise and will proceed in the following phases: an exploration of Whitehead's career, the prominent ideas in the educational works, and the interrelations between the philosophy and the educational theory. Like the eyeglasses one dons for a clearer focus, this exploration is the means toward a clearer understanding of Whitehead's educational vision.

**Whitehead's Career: A View of the Teacher**

Alfred North Whitehead's life might be considered a metaphor for the widely studied rhythm of education which he proposes as the most natural process of learning and teaching. Over and over in his life and career, he cycled through the stages of romance, precision, and generalization, looking always for another stage of romance so that he might "begin again." Lowe (1990), in his biography, notes that one of the primary reasons Whitehead left Cambridge was because he felt he "was in a groove" and he saw London as both "a new teaching opportunity and a challenge" (p. 2). Likewise, late in life, when most individuals contemplate retirement, Whitehead, seeking a new world in every sense of the phrase, migrated across the Atlantic to Harvard. He approached this major life change "in a spirit of adventure," according to Lawrence, "and to satisfy a long-standing desire to teach philosophy" (1974, p. 22). Appointed to a five-year position, Whitehead remained at Harvard for thirteen years, teaching, lecturing, and publishing. Between the ages of sixty-three and seventy-six, quite remarkably, he published all of his major philosophical works: *Science and the Modern World*, *Religion in the Making*, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect*, *The Function of Reason*, *Adventures of Ideas*, *Modes of Thought*, and his magnum opus *Process and Reality*. Clearly,
throughout life, Alfred North Whitehead was on a continual cyclical quest for always another stage of romance in his life and career.

Most Whiteheadian scholars divide Whitehead's adult life into three distinct periods: the Cambridge years (1880-1910), during which he was first a Trinity College student and later a Fellow; the London years (1914-1924), during which time his official title was Professor of Applied Mathematics at the Imperial College of Science and Technology at Kensington; and the Harvard years (1924-1947), during which he was Professor of Philosophy. Spanning a period of approximately sixty-seven years, the three periods represent quite accurately the evolution of Whitehead, the mathematician, into Whitehead, the philosopher; and each plays an important role in his development. During the first period of his life, mathematics was his chief interest although his Platonic education also provided him a strong background in the humanities; during the London years, math took a back seat to educational matters and the practical demands that occupy much of the time of an educational administrator; and in the final years, philosophy claimed the stellar position as the passion of his life. Prominent, however, in every stage of his life is a genuine interest in education, ranging from the teaching of mathematics to the teaching of philosophy. The discipline varies from age to age, but the concern for education remains a constant.

I see great value in viewing the three periods of Whitehead's career as similar to the three stages of the rhythm of education, with Whitehead himself as the personification of the learner in each of those stages. It must be noted, however, that this metaphorical interpretation is one perspective only and should not be applied rigidly since the stages of the rhythm are not rigid structures that begin, proceed, and end but, rather, a cyclical process with cycles constantly occurring within cycles. So, keeping always in mind that within each of the three stages of Whitehead's life there are at the same time other stages of the rhythm occurring, I propose the comparison as a useful starting point for a look at the life and career of the man. The analogy offers pertinent insight, I believe, into some of the most valuable assets of a process educator.
During the early years of Whitehead’s career, which are characteristic of the stage of romance, a young Whitehead is in awe of the “adventure of ideas,” which he surely sees on the horizon. During this time he experiences the excitement and wonder of as yet only imagined possibilities. This is the period when he is enamored of mathematics but at the same time begins to contemplate the metaphysics which will occupy his later years; it is during this time in which the seeds of process philosophy are sown. In the second period of life, Whitehead, in the manner he describes in his rhythm, works through precision. He turns directly to the tedious tasks of working out details and handling repetitive specifics. Ironically, this is the period of his life when Whitehead faces the tiresome affairs of committees, councils, and various educational boards. However, this time is a critical stage in the rhythm; for it is during this period that Whitehead is working through and analyzing the precise elements of his philosophy, which are, in Whiteheadian terminology, beginning to “ferment.” Whitehead presents and publishes during this period the major educational works in which the seed of process philosophy sprouts and begins to flourish.

In the third period of his life and career, Whitehead moves to the stage of generalization—this is the period of fruition which he maintains is so essential in the process of learning. At the apex of his philosophical career as a professor at Harvard, he publishes *Process and Reality,* his masterpiece—the work one might call the “ultimate generalization”—and process philosophy blooms. Although he has experienced fruition in numerous other cycles, this period represents something of a metaphysical peak for the mathematical scholar turned philosopher. He arrives at the end of a major endeavor, and then he moves on to another stage of romance, another quest and publishes during the remainder of his lifetime numerous other major works. And Whitehead continued to search until the end of his very long life, exemplifying in his life and actions the conceptions of his mind. Applying the perspective of the quotation from “The Education of an Englishman,” he truly did live “in detail” the “generalities” he thought.
Applying Whitehead’s personification of the rhythm of education to the practicalities of the classroom, I see a portrait of a teacher worthy of emulation, not a portrait to be copied exactly—but to be emulated—and applied uniquely and appropriately. A closer look reveals, in the probing beneath the surface of the picture, a portrait of not one person but two—a dual entity—a teacher and also a learner. The dual entity discloses much about not only the man but also his vision of learning; for comprised in the portrait of Whitehead’s life and career is the embodiment of the lifelong learner—which is exactly what I want my students to see in my life and career. Life is about learning, which does not cease at the end of a course or the end of the college years but, rather, continues throughout life as an enhancement of one’s life. The process of learning is a cycle that, once started, should never end. If I plant the seed of romance in a student, I have accomplished a great deed—and a difficult one.

The complexity of the task is in the sowing, which I think can be enabled through a personal incorporation of Whitehead’s rhythm of education. Through the years, I have observed the effect of a “romantic” attitude on students; I know it possesses unlimited possibilities because I have witnessed first hand its powerful effect. I think a primary reason a romantic approach “works” is because it is the nature of a child to respond to a sense of excitement and adventure and play. I remember one student who commented, in the middle of a class when I was exuberant, elated about a discovery that had just been made, “You really like this, don’t you?” The comment caused me to stop and think of the impact the actions and reactions of a teacher have on students. They respond to the environment around them and all aspects of that environment; if the classroom rapport is one where excitement about learning is a constant “being,” then romance is present, obvious, and contagious. A teacher who is also a learner impacts and influences in ways not available to the teacher who has ceased learning in order to teach. Whitehead’s continual personal quest for romance and fruition and romance has much to teach the teacher; this is my personal application. As can be witnessed from the lives of the poets, the novelists, and the artists, there is as
much to be learned from the life as from the works; for life is a reflection of the philosophy or the art, and the philosophy or the art mirrors life.

Whitehead's philosophy is also mirrored in his teacher traits and his classroom demeanor; for according to students and coworkers, Whitehead is the epitome of the professor he himself characterized in "The Rhythmic Claims of Freedom and Discipline" as the "ignorant man thinking, actively utilizing his small share of knowledge" (1929a, p. 37). According to Lawrence (1974), his use of the classroom

as a place to think was one of his notorious characteristics and a contagious one. He combined sharp and penetrating criticism with a kindly and sometimes overgenerous discernment of excellence. More than one student found the weak points in his thoughts nearly mercilessly exposed and his work graded A+. There was a touch of the pixie in Whitehead, and it gleams in the legends that have already gathered around him. Perhaps these paradoxical evaluations were his novel way of dealing with the inequities of the grading system. (pp. 23-24)

Whitehead, in spite of the fact that he was at heart a mathematician, was always more concerned with the thought processes and the thinker than the score on the examination. Lowe reports that in discussions with pupils, Whitehead "drew them out first of all" (p. 85), obviously as interested in student thoughts and comments as his own well known, eagerly sought after opinions and theories. In recounting the recollections of former students, Lowe also relates that Professor Whitehead "spared no pains to help his pupils" and that he "treated the pupils as his intellectual equals, which they were not" (p. 65). A modest man, Whitehead's reputation, among friends, colleagues, and students, was that of an extremely humble scholar, who made little fuss over personal achievements, no matter how noteworthy they were (Cappon, 1982). Bertrand Russell (1968), former student and friend, attests to his humility, reporting that his modesty was accompanied by a strong appreciation of others, as well.

Russell, in his Portraits from Memory (1956) calls Whitehead an "extraordinarily perfect" teacher who knew the capabilities of his students, cared genuinely for them, and possessed the ability to bring out the best in them (p. 97).
In a day when the term was as yet unknown, Whitehead promoted a student-centered philosophy and an environment where the teacher is not always just the disseminator of information. Applying this to the world of the classroom, I see a teacher, again, as concerned about learning as teaching. This teacher is looking to get involved in the learning process, to participate in the adventure with the student—an active participant, not an erudite expert. The teacher who assumes the attitude of Whitehead’s “ignorant man thinking” offers to the student a powerful portrait of the learner who wants to know more, who wants to grow, and who wants to experience life as a process of growth. Humble people are teachable people.

The “ignorant man thinking” Whitehead models is also a caring man thinking, giving respect as well as receiving it, and genuinely concerned for the individual. Lowe (1990) writes of Whitehead’s kindly manner as does Hendley (1986), who notes specifically the benevolence expressed by the philosophy students at Harvard. Among his students he was known to be not only caring but also extremely generous, at times to the point of being overgenerous. Cappon (1982) writes, “He [Professor Whitehead] gave help to students I myself have known who were in financial need, sometimes perhaps beyond the point of wisdom in view of his own circumstances” (p. 124). Russell makes notes that the feelings were reciprocal, recording in his Portraits from Memory (1956), that Whitehead inspired in his students “a very real and lasting affection” (p. 104).

Although Whitehead in his writings did not develop specific characteristics of the teacher, I think from his own actions and mannerisms, as well as the alive-ness he sees as so essential a part of the student self, one can easily infer the traits he values. In the classroom respect and care are essential, for they promote and support the positive rapport in which romance can thrive and the student can experience the joy of the rhythm of learning.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a perusal of Whitehead the teacher reveals, in his teaching style the application of his theory that generalization is the ultimate stage of learning. According to Lowe, this tendency to generalize was evident in his teaching practices and in the case of one particular student offered.
difficulties as well as benefits. In recording the memories of former student, Professor Herbert Dingle, Lowe writes:

At the first few lectures, Dingle was flummoxed: Whitehead was always generalizing as he went along. At the end of the first term the students had got very little; but those who stayed with Whitehead, as Dingle did, came to understand the subject better than those who were conventionally taught, though they would not pass examinations as easily; Whitehead was a poor examination coach. (1990, p. 64)

This description of Whitehead's teaching, though criticized by some, reflects the rhythm theory, as applied to the stages of formal education, that at the university level the emphasis is correctly on generalization, with the earlier primary stages of romance (in the elementary grades) and precision (at the secondary level) being long past. Whitehead views details in the background here; they are not absent, only overshadowed by the emphasis on generalization, the stage that transports the student to another level of understanding and progress.

Although Whitehead's nontraditional approach was obviously problematic for some of his students, Hendley views his generalization as a positive approach; and in his appraisal of Whitehead, the university professor, he commends his ability to "creat[e] an environment of larger knowledge and firmer purpose," [which is precisely the environment in which the stage of generalization thrives, and at the same time to] "elicit enthusiasm from the students" (p. 100). The description also conveys very well Whitehead's opposition to and obvious disregard for standardized testing. There does exist a place for details in Whitehead's plan, but that place should not dominate when a student is moving toward more complex thinking and should not be used as a measure of learning progress. Applying this to the classroom, the teacher utilizing Whitehead's approach assumes a preeminent role, that of a decision-maker who, knowing the interests and needs of her particular class, emphasizes details when they are needed and generalization when generalization is the natural progression of the rhythm. This is an awesome responsibility, but one the teacher accepts when the call to the classroom is answered.
Whitehead's Principles: A View of the Theory

Whitehead's educational writings, the early ones and the later ones, are, in typical Whiteheadian fashion, generally stated and broadly developed; but they do, very obviously, revolve around several key points, depending on the perspective and the interpretation of the reader/student of Whitehead. Central, of course, are the ideas he proposes in the "The Aims of Education" and "The Rhythm of Education"; they are monumental. However, as stated earlier, other theories compose prominent elements of his general educational thinking, as well, and when considered in relation to his basic ideas, provide a richer understanding of his total educational vision. When applied to the classroom, they offer an abundance of practical wisdom. For the purpose of this study/application, the essential points to be explored will include what I call the "alive-ness" of learning, the rhythm of education, and the very Platonic "oneness" aspect of learning and life.

An appropriate starting point is the famous quotation from the Preface of *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*, which has been previously noted in Chapter 4, but which is worthy, I believe, of yet another examination. Whitehead states, "The students are alive, and the purpose of education is to stimulate and guide their self-development. It follows as a corollary from this premiss, that the teachers also should be alive with living thoughts" (p. v.). This statement, often quoted and continually explored, is surely deserving of consideration as, possibly, the foundation of process educational thought. Holmes (1941), who views Whitehead's thinking as a pattern, calls it "the fundamental strand in the rope of [his] educational doctrine" (p. 635). At the essence of Whitehead's thinking on education is that learning is about life and life is about learning—for the student and the teacher.

The basic premise is a simple one: the student is alive; therefore, the teacher and the information should also be alive. To act otherwise is to impose lifelessness on the student and the classroom. As a classroom teacher of many years, I process Whitehead's words through the implications embedded in his writing for the teacher; but at the same time, as a student of process philosophy, I
process the educational implications through the philosophical works. The links between the two must not be overlooked; for interconnected with the educational theory is what many consider to be the core philosophical tenet of Whitehead, who sees every aspect of living as a process of growth. As I apply this growth or “creative synthesis” to the classroom, I see the teacher standing at the center, a key agent—an essential catalyst in the process—and deserving, therefore, a thoughtful exploration.

Whitehead speaks to the functions and responsibilities of the teacher in the learning process. In The Aims of Education, he writes:

What I am now insisting is that the principle of progress is from within: the discovery is made by ourselves, the discipline is self-discipline, and the fruition is the outcome of our initiative. The teacher has a double function. It is for him to elicit the enthusiasm by resonance from his own personality, and to create the environment of a larger knowledge and a firmer purpose. (1929a, pp. 39-40)

In this passage, Whitehead bestows upon the teacher a twofold task: “eliciting” enthusiasm and “creating” a proper environment, which sounds in present day methodologies very much like motivating the students and promoting a positive learning situation. However, he is proposing more than just classroom management strategies. He is suggesting, instead, a change in the traditional teacher-student perspective, and, in fact, a major change in the teacher’s mode of thinking, evolving from not only his process approach to education but also his philosophy of process. Whitehead’s belief that within each child there exists creative possibility, which the teacher must “elicit,” is a reflection of the creative force he describes in Process and Reality as “the category of the ultimate”—the drive that fuels the world and its people. Brumbaugh and Lawrence (1986) explain:

From Whitehead we get a . . . sense that there is a natural creative pressure in life underlying the creative development of more intricate and powerful life systems from simpler ones—and surging up anew in each human being, who now stands on the growing edge of mankind evolving. (p. 165)

This creative force “surging up anew” every day in every student possesses tremendous implications for the classroom teacher. In speaking to his suggestion
that the teacher "call forth the all-powerful factor of motivation from within the
student," Brumbaugh and Lawrence (1986) point out that "this calling forth is not a
matter of creating motivation, implanting it, or even stirring it up. It is a question of
focusing and guiding what is already present" (p. 165). The teacher, always a
major figure, assumes a different, perhaps, even more critical role.

The observation of Brumbaugh and Lawrence is a radical departure from the
commonly held assumption among teachers that it is their responsibility to
motivate—that they must themselves deposit this enthusiastic attitude in the
student, create and model it in some way so that the students imbibe excitement
and an eagerness to learn from them. And it must be acknowledged that students
are affected by the attitude of the teacher, but the enthusiasm does not emanate
solely from the teacher and flow into the student. From the Whiteheadian
viewpoint, motivation assumes a different stance as do both the student and the
teacher, who now function as entirely different entities, operating with different goals
and different approaches. No longer is the teacher concerned primarily with the
facade of the room or her personality as the principal motivators; all those factors
are now interrelated and revolve around the creative force within the student and
himself/herself.

This view changes the teacher, the learner, and the learning process. The
Whiteheadian perspective "requires" a depth of analysis of the total experience--
the student with the text, the student with the world, the student with the teacher, the
student with other students, the student with self--because they are all related and
"require" each other.24 This perspective directs the practitioner to a focus on,
perhaps, the most important connection of all, the student with self and with that
innate creativity that, according to Whitehead, is that essential creative force.
Creativity is, as Hartshorne (1961) reminds us, "not merely a Whiteheadian
principle, but the principle--the category of the ultimate' . . . ; [it is, in fact] the key to
his philosophy" (p. 35). Likewise, it is the key to his educational vision.

Whitehead's belief in the innate creativity of the student is significant. It is
equally significant that he looks to the teacher, through "resonance of his [or her] own

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personality," to accomplish, or "elicit," the enthusiasm and positive environment in which the creative force of the student will surge. An enormous expression of confidence in the teacher, the task also places great responsibility on the teacher. The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) defines resonance as "the reinforcement or prolongation of sound by reflection" and resonant as "re-echoing, resounding" (pp. 726-728), definitions which, when applied in this context, suggest important relationships—interconnections—among teacher, student, and the classroom. As the teacher's personality resonates in the classroom, so does the student's personality; and in like manner, the class personality also resonates. Whitehead's message is clear: when considering personalities and class rapport, one cannot isolate the teacher from the students, the teacher from the classroom, or the classroom from the students. Indeed, the classroom personality itself might be viewed as a reflection of the teacher and the student connections in that classroom, all of which are important. However, the teacher's personality remains a central focus.

From the standpoint of practical teacher application, the "resonance of . . . personality" which Whitehead describes implies an especially crucial connection between teacher and student. This is obvious since the teacher's personality is reflected in the student. It also implies an underlying assumption by Whitehead, which I believe has been overlooked: that complementary assumption is that the teacher, who also possesses creativity as an innate part of her being, should call upon that creative force as she "resonates" and "elicits" creativity from the students. As the guiding force in the classroom, the teacher impacts the sphere of her influence, the entities in that classroom, in either a positive manner or a negative manner. Her personality is a catalyst, or a dynamic, capable of far-reaching, monumental consequences. This view of Whitehead regarding the critical role of the teacher directs me to a careful rethinking and reconsidering of the effects of a teacher's personality, especially in the resonating words and actions. Because those words and actions stretch into lives and worlds many years and miles down the road, they should be a prime concern of teachers every day as we enter our classrooms; and we should keep in mind that, as teachers, we never know what
that student has left behind on that particular morning or afternoon. Our concern may 
be the only concern that student experiences; our passion for learning and life may 
be the only emotion that student ever witnesses. It is, therefore, imperative that 
we call upon every “drop” or “pulse” of our creative spirit to “elicit” that same spirit 
from our students.

Lowe (1961) sees passion in both Whitehead, the educator, and 
Whitehead, the metaphysician. In “The Approach to Metaphysics” he writes:

Besides imagination, passion appears to be indispensable in 
metaphysical work. This should not surprise us; it is generally, if not 
quite universally, true in other fields of constructive endeavour that 
only those who entertain some ideas with emotional intensity have 
anything to say. All Whitehead’s philosophical writings manifest this 
intensity. The Harvard students who came to the Whiteheads on 
Sunday evenings remember it too. What he talked about, he cared 
about; the care was so evident in his voice . . . . (pp. 193-194)

Whitehead, the mathematician and teacher, was a passionate man who cared and 
felt with intensity. Passion and care were evident to his students during his lifetime, 
and they are evident to students of process philosophy today. An essential trait of 
the teacher who seeks the “alive-ness” Whitehead proposes as a foundation of 
learning, passion is quickly and easily recognized by students. Young people are 
not easily fooled; they know which teachers care deeply and with passion—about 
them and about their field of study—and it affects their learning and their lives. A 
capacity for passion is an integral component of the teacher exemplifying the 
“alive-ness” Whitehead proposes as the foundation of learning.

Passionate teachers approach teaching and learning with zest and attempt 
to imbue this zestfulness and life in all aspects of their teaching, which Whitehead 
insists is essential. In “The Aims of Education,” one of the first suggestions he 
makes is that the child “from the very beginning of his education, . . . should 
experience the joy of discovery” (p. 2). Learning is not complete without joy and 
the “alive-ness” so basic to a process approach. This “alive-ness” is possible, 
according to Whitehead, if teachers remember several fundamental premises, the 
most famous of which is that the ideas introduced to the child should be “few and 
important, . . . and thrown into every combination possible” (p. 2). Similarly, he
advises, "We enunciate two educational commandments, 'Do not teach too many subjects,' and again, 'What you teach, teach thoroughly' " (p. 2). These practices, Whitehead maintains, will prevent the "mental dryrot" and the "inert ideas" he sees as so detrimental to the learning process.

Known well and accepted for years as the core principles of process educational thought, the sage pieces of advice appear on the surface to be simple and profound; however, the task, accomplished in the manner described, is considerably more complex and involves consideration of several significant points. According to Brumbaugh and Lawrence (1986),

The primary question—and there is nothing easy about it—is what to jettison, what to modify, and what to preserve. To assume the posture of progressive or conservative, per se, is as dull-witted in education as it is in politics. Secondly, it is important to notice that the argument as to what to save and what to subordinate is always fraught with practical considerations. No one can provide a guidebook for Saving Only What Is Good. There are always risks and failures. Education must always be prepared to have a growing edge which, like that of nature herself, is sometimes unsuccessful. (p. 167)

The insight of Brumbaugh and Lawrence is valuable to both the process scholar and the classroom teacher for its realistic perspective to the problems inherent in Whitehead’s admonition “to teach a little and teach it well”; additionally, it calls a necessary attention to the fact that the task of the teacher is a difficult one and cannot be reduced to a simplistic approach that following two or three basic rules ensures success. Whitehead’s basic tenets must be considered in relation to all that he said about learning and teaching, for in the very next line after the often cited “few and important” quote is another principle extremely important to Whitehead’s educational views. In that passage he writes, “The child should make them [the few and important ideas] his own, and should understand their application here and now in the circumstances of his actual life” (p. 2). This is a salient point in Whitehead’s thinking but one that sometimes gets lost amidst the wisdom of the most “quotable quotes.” At all times, the philosophy must be considered in its totality, and always it must be considered in relation to his philosophy of process.
Whitehead's insistence on "alive-ness" in the learner, the teacher, and the knowledge leads naturally to an exploration of his rhythm of learning, which is critical to understanding his educational vision. In the opinion of most Whiteheadian scholars, the sense of the man and his philosophy resides in the three stages of romance, precision, and generalization (which were discussed in detail in Chapter 4). In addition, the fact that any discussion and analysis of Whitehead eventually culminate with a focus on their significance is a testament to their import. Whitehead's rhythm has also been viewed, as noted earlier, as analogous to the concrescence of the actual entity, a similarity often overlooked by educators because of the intricacies involved in reading and understanding the metaphysical writings. The relationship, however, is critical to a thorough understanding of the possibilities of a process approach to education. As Whitehead frequently said and wrote, they "require" each other. The natural rhythm Whitehead applies to educational progress is the same rhythm present throughout nature. In The Function of Reason (1929b), Whitehead asserts:

The Way of Rhythm pervades all life, and indeed all physical existence. The common principle of Rhythm is one of the reasons for believing that the root principles of life are, in some lowly form, exemplified in all types of physical existence. (pp. 16-17)

In this passage is an essential of Whitehead's educational principles and his process philosophy; here can be found the basic link—the relation—that connects all forms of life, from the most elemental, a cell, to the most complex, the human being. We are all involved in the same process, or as Brumbaugh and Lawrence point out, the "actual occasion" of a single neutron is related to the "actual occasion" experienced by a person. In applying this to education, Brumbaugh and Lawrence (1986) state:

Education should fund and harmoniously order the events which are gathered into the continuous development of the person. Such an enriching of his personal resources must give him maximum opportunities for future self-realization. . . . The human organism is an incredibly complicated network of subordinate organisms which serve and support him; and his educational development must be understood and directed in terms of the repeated cycles of his growth. (p. 175)
Once again, the essence of the “actual entity” in Whitehead’s general scheme of things is illuminated. Always, we must return to the process and the “relating.” The Whiteheadian educator must establish as a basic premise that a true understanding and a meaningful application of Whitehead call always for a connecting of the interrelationships between process philosophy and process educational theories.

**Whitehead’s Vision: A View of the World**

These interrelationships bring the process educator once again to the “alive-ness” and the rhythm of education and, finally, to what I propose is the crux of Whitehead’s vision of education—growth and self-development—embodied in and evolving from the connection of the rhythms to the concept of the “alive-ness.” For years, scholars have pondered over Whitehead’s theory of the student as a living organism and have explicated the rhythm of education. Some, with great insight and expertise, have sought the interrelations between the philosophy and the education. What I have not found, however, is a focus on the connecting of the two primary areas of thinking: the “alive-ness” and the rhythms, which, like all of Whitehead’s entities, occasions, and theories, “require” each other.

In typical Whiteheadian fashion, Whitehead is speaking once again of relations and “relating.” He is not proposing simply that learning, like the students and the teacher, should be alive, or that learning should proceed in the cyclical fashion of the rhythm. He is saying, rather, that the alive-ness stems from the rhythm and the rhythm stems from the alive-ness. Learning is living, and living is learning; but, most important, learning is “life-giving.” Whitehead’s fundamental message revolves around the growth process, which is necessary to the student because the student is a living organism, and which proceeds through the phases of the rhythm because the natural cycle encourages and supports the growth.

The most significant of the three stages is generalization; for from this stage springs the transformation which William Doll insists is the crucial element and ultimate import of Whitehead. Doll (1993) asserts that the transformative power holds “the greatest developmental potential of any of his [Whitehead’s] curriculum ideas” (p. 146); I agree. Whitehead’s principle of life, growth, and development
is, most certainly, a basic aim of education; and like many other students of Whitehead before me, I believe there is much to be learned from the suggestion to avoid “inert ideas,” isolated facts and details which offer a lifeless knowledge. The learning should be useful and applicable, and it should relate directly to the experiences of the student. However, I believe Whitehead was implying—pointing the process thinker/educator toward—a greater truth, a truth only discernible through the Platonic conception he clings to as that ultimate Truth. In spite of the fact that he attempts in his cosmology and his educational vision to “adapt” Plato to the modern world, Whitehead operates with a Platonist “vision,” reaching for an “ideal” with the idealistic conception that it is somehow possible.

Whitehead’s vision of education as a Platonic vision is centered in the stage of generalization, that stage where the learner achieves synthesis and experiences fruition. When compared to the analogous stage of the actual occasion, this is the stage of concrescence, or satisfaction. In *The Aims of Education*, Whitehead calls generalization “the final success” although he emphasizes it is not to be considered the end. On the contrary, it is the window to a new beginning, another life; for its “reaction towards romance” (p. 36) impels it toward and into another cycle. Thus, the cycle is perpetuated; and the potential for new discoveries and new growth supports the process of self-development which is so integral a part of Whitehead’s vision. Herein, also, resides the Platonic vision, a vision Whitehead alludes to in *The Function of Reason* (1929b) when he describes the beginning again of the cycles and the ascent to a higher level, the stage of Generalization (p. 17). This is the heart of Whitehead’s vision: the goal is always to seek the higher ground, another level—the quest is onward and upward toward that ultimate point toward which the ascent is aimed. What Whitehead does not articulate is the idealism inherent in the object of the quest; for the goal is not just greater knowledge and increased understanding—the goal is much larger and much grander. The ultimate aim is what I phrase “a oneness with the world”—a glimpse, if only for a moment, or a Whiteheadian “throb” or a “pulse”—of one’s place in the general scheme of things. And in this way the transformation of which William Doll writes,
becomes a reality. Ultimate understanding—a sense of "why I am here and how I relate to everyone and everything else"—this is Whitehead's vision of education and the world.

Applying this Platonic interpretation to the classroom offers the teacher a myriad of possibilities for rethinking teaching and learning. Indeed, it alters all aspects of the process, for the process now assumes grander aspirations and, like the aspirations themselves, raises the teacher and student to another level. As all classroom teachers know, students perform to the level of expectation demanded of them. The more they believe they can do, the more they achieve. Therefore, a philosophy of the "striving toward an ideal," if allowed to permeate all aspects of the learning process, has the potential for influencing in many and varied ways. And if it becomes a way of thinking and a way of looking at the world, and not a superficial attitude only, then students and teacher can strive together toward greater understanding. As participants in this ascent, who share and converse, the connections that Whitehead describes abound; connections to life and conversations about life are the lessons the student remembers anyway.

Embracing the philosophy of self-development and growth, student and teacher can consciously fix their sights on moving toward other achievements, not looking for an end but another beginning. From the classroom teacher's perspective, I see many positive effects on the students: not only are they growing, but they are also being afforded the opportunity to experience the growth, to talk about it and to feel good about themselves, realizing they are involving themselves in a quest for meaning about themselves and their world at the same time they are seeking meaning about a particular subject or topic of study. I know and have witnessed many times the effect on students when they sense that the teacher appreciates their goals and ambitions and values their viewpoints. It is a very good thing to let students know you have learned something from them—that you have experienced growth together. The opportunity for transformation is as available to the teacher as to the student.
The vision of a transformative classroom, though idealistic and theoretical, is expansive enough to include space for the practical world of the classroom with all its bureaucratic details and endless tasks. The image provides hope for a visionary teacher willing to make space for the ideal—willing to embrace the contradictions inherent in the combination of the theoretical and the practical. The visionary teacher—if she never loses sight of the vision and the potentialities for transformation—can share with her students a glimpse of the possibilities of an ideal world. As creatures not yet hardened by the restrictions of the daily, down-to-earth practicalities, children possess still the capacity for wonder and romance. All children deserve the chance to seek out their dreams—to live, to work, and to play in a world with which they feel a kinship. This I have always believed; my adventure through post-modernism, currere, and process philosophy has reaffirmed it. It has also brought me full circle—and I end where I began—wiser, stronger—seeking always the wisdom which “hovers” in my past and points me onward and upward toward my future.

And so, I return one final time to the passage I discovered years ago in Modes of Thought: “we are in the world and the world is in us” (1938, p. 227). This is the cosmology of Whitehead, the philosopher; this is the vision of Whitehead, the educator. It is a vision that must begin with the teacher. Platonic in every sense of the word, the vision, is, indeed, a window to a myriad of possibilities for thinking about teaching and learning. However, the vision also incorporates the practicalities necessary in the classroom as well. This, I believe, is the ultimate wisdom—idealism and usefulness—two modes of thinking not usually paired.

End Notes

22. Johnson (1983) offers an interesting comment on the concept of a copy. He writes: “One of Whitehead’s remarks concerning ‘adventure’ particularly impressed me: ‘the most un-Greek thing that we can do is to copy the Greeks. For emphatically they were not copyists’ (A.J. 353). I understand Whitehead to mean by ‘copy’: slavishly duplicate, or be excessively . . . concerned with, the details of anything the Greeks said or did—without emulating the Greek spirit which generated these particular ‘things’, which are specific reactions to basic situations” (p. 207).
23. Although Whitehead was generally praised for his knowledge of the subject matter and his enthusiasm for teaching and his students, Lowe (1990) notes that he was also known for some rather nontraditional teaching practices, such as teaching without a textbook and assigning a text and then lecturing without use of the assigned material. Additionally, he was known to be the typical absent-minded professor, forgetting to leave his office for class and sometimes lecturing past class time. See also Johnson (1983) for personal accounts by students of Whitehead as teacher/lecturer.

24. Commonalities between Whitehead and Dewey offer yet another avenue for the classroom teacher to explore as she seeks "a"—and not "the" way to bring life and zest to the classroom. Action is one of them. Dr. Joe Green reminded me of a Deweyan perspective I find especially appropriate in relation to Whiteheadian thinking and which I intend, in the next stage of romance, to explore very carefully—i.e., to Dewey "mind" is a "verb."

25. The child's capacity for wonder and awe calls to the English teacher's mind and heart the lines from Wordsworth's great poem, Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood:

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But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
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(1956, II. 64-66).
I see great similarities between the child in Wordsworth's poem who, uncorrupted as yet by the things of the world, delights in the newness and freshness of the earth, and the student in the "romantic" phase, who thrills to the delights and wonders of a new study. And as I end this phase of study, I see also the beginning of yet another phase of "romance"—a study of Whitehead and his thoughts on the poets of the Romantic Period—and the rhythm continues. The process, the learning, the growth never ends.
REFERENCES


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VITA

Janis Pardue Hill is a Louisiana educator with twenty-five and a half years in the public school system. She graduated from Northeast Louisiana University with a bachelor of science degree in education and from Louisiana Tech with a master of arts degree in English. Twenty-five years of her career were spent teaching English at Ouachita Parish High School in Monroe, Louisiana, primarily senior English and Advanced Placement English IV. At Ouachita she served as Department Chair and sponsor of numerous organizations and activities. She also spent a semester at Denham Springs High School in Denham Springs, Louisiana.

Janis has been active in professional organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English, where she has recently presented papers relating the English classroom to process study; Louisiana Council of Teachers of English; and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, where she has served on reviewing committees in all parts of the state. She has also participated at every level of the Louisiana Department of Education's standards and assessment development program. In 1998 and 1999, she served as a consultant for regional development of documents aligning the state standards with local curriculum.

Since 1994, Janis has been working toward a doctoral degree in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University. Study in curriculum theory developed into a focus on the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, which has led to an interest in process education. Janis is currently serving as a member of the Advisory Council of the Association for Process Philosophy of Education.

Janis is married to Charles A. Hill, Jr., a lifetime law enforcement officer, who retired as a Lieutenant from the Monroe Police Department in 1998, and who is currently with the U. S. Marshals Service. They are the parents of Trey, who graduated from Northeast Louisiana University and who is currently in graduate school at Louisiana State University, and Amy, who is a junior at Louisiana State University. Janis is the daughter of J. C. and Demaris Pardue, also of Monroe. She will be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in December 1999.
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