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Awakening Care: A Possibility at the Heart of Teaching

by

Sandra Wilde

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Awakening Care: A Possibility at the Heart of Teaching" submitted by Sandra Wilde in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Annette LaGrange

Supervisor, Dr. Annette LaGrange, Department of Curriculum & Instruction

Dr. David Jardine, Department of Curriculum & Instruction

Anne Phelan

Dr. Anne Phelan, Department of Teacher Education & Supervision

Aug 30, 1996

Date

ABSTRACT

This hermeneutic study interprets the meaning of care in the context of teaching. It brings together different texts and textures of the notion of care--examples of care found in research, literature, poetry, film, philosophy and personal experience. This study weaves an interpretation of the meaning of care in teaching, drawing upon these sources and the researcher's conversations with two teachers.

This interpretation highlights the issues which emerged during the research process. The first issue is the apparent loss of the question of care and the task of uncovering and situating this phenomenon. The study then turns to the task of recovering the question of care by exposing some of the ways it exists in actual experience, such as: understanding, listening deeply and living authentically.

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DEDICATION

For my daughter, Sasha, who taught me so much.

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CHAPTER ONE

OPENING UP A TOPIC

Care is a word that is used so often, in many different situations. Because it can be used to refer to almost anything, it often refers to nothing significant. It is a notion which has almost become a cliche. Everybody knows what it means to care. And everybody knows that teaching has something to do with caring. So why discuss something that everybody already knows about?

The issue of care needs to be discussed for this very reason. In fact, it was this sense of *everybody knows* that urged me to write about care. Maybe it is time to consider that usually the word care is used in a way that trivializes, narrows, or skims over a phenomenon which is much more complex. We may have taken for granted, and thus forgotten, the importance of the question, "What does it mean to care?"

And this question of care may be at risk in classrooms. If the world at large does not consider the work of care to be important, how is the work of teaching considered in such a world? Speaking from experience, I know that teachers often receive messages that belittle and undermine their work. I am not suggesting that, as teachers, we are innocent victims. We are tangled up and implicated in these forces. Madeleine Grumet (1988) addressed this issue when she criticized teachers for forgetting the importance of nurturing, care and sustenance. She questioned teachers' drive to join forces with processes which stress,

> differentiation from other, the denial of affective relations ... [which stress] categorical, universalistic components ...,

> denying relation.... So this is ... [what] we keep auditioning for, trying to get on teams of technologists who can't remember that they are part of the world they are changing, into groups of professionals who claim that care and ethics can be derived from relations ... that are predicated on privilege and uneven distributions of wealth and power. (1988, p. 186)

The actual work that teachers do is not always supported in the language that teachers have at their disposal, in the metanarratives, the big, taken for granted assumptions about teaching. And as Grumet suggested above, sometimes teachers forget that they have tacitly assumed certain things, and some of these assumptions may actually undermine their work.

Perhaps we need to reconsider teaching in terms of this complexity, opening up our eyes to the way our assumptions colour the way we understand it. Perhaps we need to recognize that some of our assumptions may not support and sustain this work. If, for instance, we forget the importance of care, we also take for granted the way that care is always already at work in our classrooms. If we forget the importance of care, we take for granted the importance of questions such as: "What am I, as teacher, concerned with?" "What is the best way for me to proceed in *this* situation?"

Of course these questions are an important part of the day-to-day lives of teachers. This is what needs to be remembered. Thus, re-membering care is what this thesis is about. And re-membering may involve, "not forgetting", "gaining new members" and "putting back together" (Jardine, 1992b, p. 14). It is not my intent to present care as if what it is, is already fixed and determined. It is not my intent to decide whether or not this or that teacher cares. This study

begins with the understanding that the notion of care is always already at work in classrooms. The way we craft and shape our lives in classrooms is the working out of care. As Heidegger (1962) said, " 'Being-in-the-world' has the stamp of 'care' " (p. 243). Care is the work of shaping our lives, thus we are possessed by care for as long as we are alive. Heidegger referred to an ancient fable to illustrate this way that care is embedded in our lives:

> Once when 'Care' was crossing the river, she saw some clay; she thoughtfully took up a piece and began to shape it. While she was meditating on what she had made, Jupiter came by. 'Care' asked him to give it spirit, and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted her name to be bestowed upon it, he forbade this, and demanded that it be given his name instead. While 'Care' and Jupiter were disputing, Earth arose and desired that her own name be conferred on the creature, since she had furnished it with part of her body. They asked Saturn to be their arbiter, and he made the following decision, which seemed a just one: 'Since you, Jupiter, have given its spirit, you shall receive that spirit at its death; and since you, Earth, have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since 'Care' first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives. And because there is now a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called '*homo*', for it is made out of *hummus* (earth). (p. 242)

We commonly assume that care exists in our subjective emotions, as something *we* possess. However, the fable brings to light a different way of understanding the role of care in our lives. It suggests that being human is being composed of body and spirit, and that Care possesses both the body and the spirit of the human being. Care may be understood as something which possesses us, because as long as we live, we are faced with this work of shaping our lives. As Heidegger (1962) said, our "transformation

into what ... [we] can be ... is accomplished by 'care' " (p. 243). We are *in* care as long as we are in the world. How we choose to face the world is a function of care.

Thus, care can also be understood as being careful and devoted. If we are always already in the midst of crafting ourselves; the extent of our carefulness is always being worked out in the particularities of our existence. If we remember this, we can choose to live more carefully. And we can choose to teach with care.

The intent of this study is to address this notion of care in terms of teachers' experiences. It is an attempt to open up the question of care by also opening up the lifeworld of teaching. The study begins, in the next chapter, by discussing the issue of addressing this question. The remainder of the study turns to teachers' experiences and to the task of interpretation. The first issue to be addressed is the apparent loss of the question of care. This theme arose from teachers' frustrations and disappointments; it appeared when teachers' intentions to care were undermined. Thus, Chapter 3 addresses these experiences and situates them within a historical and philosophical context. In the remaining chapters, the study turns to the care-full work that teachers do, despite a world which may have forgotten, work which showed itself as: understanding, listening deeply and living authentically. This thesis is an attempt to uncover care as it exists and may exist in classrooms. It intends to consider teaching in terms of the possibilities which may arise in the midst of this uncovering.

CHAPTER TWO

INVITING A QUESTION

The Arrival of the Question

When I look back on the last few years I have spent teaching, I can now see how the notion of caring was important long before I was in the position of having to come up with a research proposal. The topic sometimes arrived in the midst of difficult, challenging or unusual teaching experiences. I now realize that, not only did *I* choose the topic of my research, the *topic* chose me as well.

I remember a particular situation where the notion of caring first appeared strange, something to consider. I had received a note from a parent of one of my kindergarten students. It read, "To Mrs. Wilde: Thank you for being such a caring teacher." The previous day, her daughter, Natalie, had fallen ill and I did what I could to help her feel better. I remember thinking that the note was odd because it implied that I had done something extra, yet I had only done what was called for.

Is caring an extra? Is it an accessory to the real teaching? To assume that the question of caring is not already built into teaching seems strange. When we care, we care *about something*. Is caring not linked to our concern to teach well, and some of our basic motivations as teachers? Is it not linked to the way we choose to do our work? Is caring not more than something that can be tacked on to the real work we do?

The topic of caring began to work on me even before I began to formally pursue it. During my early years as a kindergarten teacher I overheard a conversation between two of my teaching colleagues. The comment I overheard went something like this: "Kindergarten teachers don't really teach; they baby sit. Anyone can take care of a bunch of little kids". When I heard this I first felt discounted, then defensive. I also felt a knot in my stomach that told me that there was more to the comment. The comment was *familiar*; I had heard something like it many times before.

My colleague's comment was not merely personal; it implicated all teachers. It served as an indicator of some of the underlying values and assumptions which shape our common definition of teacher. The statement implied that teaching and caring are two different and separate activities, that caring is an unimportant aspect of teaching because anyone can do it. The knot in my stomach told me that I could not ignore the inadequacy and emptiness of these assumptions.

Is caring something distinctly separate from teaching? Because caring is something that we have all experienced, is it unimportant? Is caring no more than a tool which is used, and only required at certain times, for instance, during activities such as babysitting?

No. I did not experience caring as if it were something to use in this way. Rather, it would seem more fitting to refer to care as something which used me. Although we may all agree that care is an important aspect of minding children, the implications of care are also important in places where, traditionally, the question of

care may not be part of the local discourse. Is the question of care not linked to the ethical issue of doing one's work well?

For teachers this may mean, for instance, being committed to teaching well, and taking seriously their potential to make a difference in the lives of children. In this sense, care is more than a subjective emotion, cut off from the objective reality of teaching, it is deeply connected to all that teachers do. Thus, the question of caring is not only important for females, baby-sitters, mothers and the teachers of young children, it is important for all of us. This is the understanding that was lacking in my colleague's comment.

It was also my experience that this understanding appeared to be lacking in most staff room discussions. Teaching was sometimes treated as the sum of a lifeless list of things to do, as if to assume that what constitutes teaching could be contained in a how-to manual. I often wondered how it was possible that trivial matters could take up so much time and energy when vital issues, such as care, were often passed over. And if the notion of care was discussed at all, it was often reduced to contrived and meaningless programs which we were supposed to add to our present classroom commitments. Such attempts to address this important question felt empty and inadequate. I often felt as though the *heart* of teaching was ignored, missed or removed.

Thus, I became interested in bringing the notion of caring back into discussions, without flattening and narrowing the topic, without making it just one more aspect of the how-to manual. It became important for me to show that caring is

much more than an emotion that we project on to others. And it is more than a subjective experience, which we add to the objective things that really matter. It became important to understand caring in a deeper sense, to show how caring constitutes what it means to be a teacher and how it is connected to our ability as teachers to *concern* ourselves with teaching well.

Exploring the Literature and Fine Tuning the Question

Once I had chosen my research question, I was determined to begin with narrative descriptions of caring, and to look to the lifeworld to understand the notion better. I was eager to begin exploring the topic hermeneutically and (to some extent) phenomenologically. And I must admit, I was not enthusiastic about beginning the research process with a traditional literature review. After all, Husserl so passionately suggested that we look, to the things themselves! I feared that immersing myself in conceptualized notions of caring, would take me further from the existential question. So, I approached the literature with caution and a healthy dose of scepticism.

Yet, once I was immersed in the reading, I realized, with the help of hermeneutics, that the value of the literature depended on me; it depended on my ability to interpret what I read and on my ability to bring the literature into an open conversation with actual lived experience. I realized that I did not have to take everything I read at face value, and that some of what I read would not be significant at all. I realized the importance of reading the literature not as a lump of static truths,

which I would simply *add* my data to, but as a way of deepening my understanding of the research question.

The initial literature review consisted mostly of reading theoretical articles which address the notion of caring in the areas of psychology (Gilligan, 1982; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988), feminism (Abel & Nelson, 1990; Baines, Evans, & Neysmith, 1991; Ferguson, 1991; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Graham, 1983; Larrabee, 1993; Lopata, 1993; Tronto, 1993), education (Grumet, 1988; Noddings, 1984, 1992), child care (LaGrange & Keogh, 1995; LaGrange & Read, 1991; Nelson, 1990), and nursing (Benner, 1984; Benner & Wrubel, 1989; Bishop & Scudder, 1986, 1990, 1991; Leppanen Montgomery, 1991). Each of these areas brought forward different perspectives of caring. These perspectives sometimes confirmed and sometimes contradicted my own assumptions about the topic. Sometimes it was as if what I read, was making a claim on me; it was as if what I had read changed my understanding of the topic and I had to acknowledge this change. In these instances, I was hermeneutically required to make a decision about how to proceed. Hermeneutics required that I admit that I was involved in a conversation with what I read, and therefore, if a disruption occurred I could not proceed as if nothing had happened.

One such disruption occurred over the issue of gender and its relationship to caring. The relationship between women and care is an important one; I knew that I could not simply skip over this issue as if it did not exist. I had to decide how I would proceed.

Much of the research which specifically focused on the issue of caring addressed the link between caring and women's experiences or addressed caring as a feminist issue. For instance, Carol Gilligan's (1982) work, In a Different Voice, was pivotal in linking together the issue of care with women. Gilligan, whose interest was the issue of moral development, developed a theory of an alternative morality, a caring morality. Her caring morality could be distinguished from theories based on the appeal to universal principles. The different voice that she discovered, was the voice of care, a morality based on the ability to maintain connections with others, and on being aware of the concrete particulars of experience. According to Gilligan, this moral voice had been largely ignored in previous research because such research had focused exclusively on male experiences.

The linking of women and caring opened up a series of debates among the feminist community. Gilligan stated that she did not intend to support the assumption that men and women are inherently different. Nevertheless, some writers questioned the implications of this link between women and care (Abel & Nelson 1990; Larrabee, 1993; Tronto, 1993). Other writers, such as Baines, Evans, and Neysmith (1991), feared that the linking of women and caring may be used to justify the further oppression of women. For instance, they stated that it may be dangerous to assume that caring is not a form of work but, "a form of relating to others that comes naturally to women [not men] .... These differences may have provided a pervasive and persistent rationale for circumscribing women's role to the home" (pp. 16-17).

Writers within the feminist community, who were concerned about the relationship between care and the notion of gender difference, expressed a range of interpretations.

In the face of this debate I had to decide how to proceed. How was I to address the issue of women and caring? I realized that my response to this question had to be made while remembering the purpose of *this* study. It occurred to me that the debate over the issue of difference was not in need of being fixed by me, rather, what was needed, hermeneutically, was to get underneath such a debate in order to open up the question of *caring* to a more generous conversation. I was not interested in putting an end to this debate, but rather in seeking understanding in the midst of it. Rather than focusing on the issue of difference by asking: Are women natural care givers? Are women biologically predisposed to caring? Are women prone to subjective, emotional behaviour and men prone to objective, rational behaviour?, I wanted to step back and ask different types of questions, questions about the notion of care. For instance: Is caring simply a subjective emotion? How does the association of caring, and subjectivity affect its value in our world? If the voice of care is not heard, how does this affect the experience of both female and male teachers who are faced everyday with the issue of care?

Gilligan's study brought to light women's voice of care and called us to notice the silencing of that voice. After reading Gilligan and her critics I wondered about the silencing of *care* as well as the silencing of women. What are the implications of *care* being silenced; what are the implications for both women and men? What are the implications for children in schools?

The issue of gender did not disappear; I understood that assumptions about gender affect assumptions about caring. Thus, I recognized the importance of recognizing the existing patriarchal structures that affect the experience of caring, the importance of situating "caring within patriarchal relations that characterize advanced industrialized societies" (Baines, Evans, and Neysmith, 1991, p. 19). I realized the importance of locating patriarchal assumptions rather than blindly operating from within them.

Some of the literature which addressed the question of caring, treated the question as an abstract issue which could be examined apart from any meaningful context. For instance, Nel Nodding's (1984) work, Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Education, analyzed caring as an individual relationship between a care giver and care receiver, with little or no consideration of the context of caring. I agreed with her critics (Bishop and Scudder, 1991) who took exception to Nodding's removal of caring from the world in which it occurs. I agreed that caring must be understood within a particular context, within the relations which sustain it and give it meaning.

Fisher and Tronto's (1990) work served to further my exploration of caring and its relationship to a particular cultural context. They showed how the existence of a hierarchical assumptions cause a fragmentation of the caring process. They explained how this fragmentation is detrimental to the goal of providing care, how the hierarchy places the care givers, those involved in the hands on work of care (most often women) in a position of little power and influence. They argued that it is the

separation between caring at the top of the hierarchy (care in the form of decision making and influence) and caring at the bottom of hierarchy (the actual hands on work of providing care to others) which serves to be oppressive to women.

Fisher and Tronto's work, showed how those involved in hands on care giving, such as child care workers, nurses, and teachers may be in a position of little power and control over the larger caring process. Fisher and Tronto concluded that the more a particular occupation is associated with care giving, the less status is given to the occupation. Reading Fisher and Tronto, and considering the implications of what I read disturbed me; I was angered that something as important as providing care was given so little value in our society.

The devaluing of care that Fisher and Tronto described reminded me of my colleague's comment, that anyone can care. It seemed to me that the devaluing of care had something to do with the way caring was placed at odds with technological expertise. Caring is assumed to be subjective and completely separate from technical objective work. This dichotomy may help to explain why individuals in the caring occupations sometimes feel compelled to stress the technological aspects of their jobs in the quest for recognition and status. Yet, I wondered what may be lost as a result of such a narrow focus. As I read Ferguson's (1991) article, Women's Caring: Feminist Perspectives on Social Welfare, I shared her fear that as "workers seek to improve the status of their work through an emphasis on its educational component, there is real risk that the 'care' component may be devalued" (p. 83). I decided that part of my

research would have to involve uncovering the assumptions which have contributed to the lack of value associated with caring.

I was also concerned when I read arguments persuading teachers to improve the status of teaching by minimizing the human aspects of the job. According to Katz (1988) and Spodeck and Saracho (1988), teaching is a semi profession, and therefore, in order to improve the status of teaching, educators need to attain the characteristics of professions in order to improve their status. Katz identifies these characteristics as: social necessity, altruism, autonomy, code of ethics, distance from the client, standards of practice, prolonged training, and specialized knowledge. Certainly, these aspects have their place. The list itself did not bother me. What I found most disturbing was Katz' underlying assumption that teaching, the way it actually is, is somehow not good enough, that teaching would be better if it were more like the "true" professions.

Katz' argument lacks an appreciation and understanding of the uniqueness of teaching; it skips over the questions, "Why do we assume that certain professions are more valuable? Why do we seek to emulate them?" Her argument does not recognize that occupations which claim to be professions hold a great deal of power and authority and that they sit on the top of a hierarchy. Hugman's (1991) work assisted my critique of Katz and her associates. He showed that the type of caring which is associated with a particular occupation appears to be closely related to the position of that occupation on the hierarchy. Hugman distinguishes caring about: a commitment or an orientation, from caring for: the actual act of providing care to another individual. Occupations which claim to be professions such as medicine and law, may be said to

care about--caring may occur from a distance; it may be removed from the day-to-day, face-to-face act of providing care. However, occupations such as nursing and other traditionally feminine professions, which claim to care for as well as care about, often act on the pronouncements of traditionally masculine professions.

The question of caring is affected by patriarchal values which place subjectivity at odds with objectivity. The question of caring is thus viewed to be secondary and separate from objective matters. Patriarchal values have been described as the force behind the quest for power through the objective and at the expense of the subjective. Griffin (1989) referred to a hierarchical worldview, "whose assumptions are so widely accepted by this civilization that we do not even think of it as an ideology" (p. 8). She described this "split culture", as the force behind the drive to control and dominate the natural order, and thus anything believed to be closer to nature, such as, women, people of colour, and children. She cited the witch burnings, and the African slave trade as examples of threats to the "scientific" assumption that "men ordered nature" (p.14). Within such a system of beliefs, care, and compassion are not only de-valued but threatening, since, as Griffin stated, "compassion brings us back to our capacity to feel" (p. 15). Such hierarchical assumptions may also serve to undermine any aspects of teaching that do not appear to be objective or scientific. Thus, teaching is often understood in terms of the "sciences" rather than in terms of the not so tidy way that life actually unfolds in classrooms.

What I read encouraged me to uncover the uniqueness and inherent value of what teachers actually do. I realized the importance of placing caring back into the

relationships that connect it to the act of teaching and the importance of understanding caring within the unique context of teaching. The value of caring would then arise from its connection to teaching, rather than from emulating other, higher status professions. And thus valuing what teachers actually do would arise from considering what teachers actually do.

My reading of Heidegger's Being and Time (1962) greatly influenced my understanding of caring. Heidegger showed that caring is a primordial aspect of our Being human. He opened up the possibility of exploring caring ontologically, of exploring what it means to *be* caring. Heidegger showed that part of the task of understanding our existence involves uncovering the structures that may limit our understanding. He showed how it is possible to understand a notion such as caring without being constrained by limiting assumptions.

Reading Heidegger influenced my decision to explore what caring means in the context of teaching, what it means to be a teacher who cares, to approach the question of caring as a primordial issue; deeply connected to what it means to be human.

Exploring the literature gave me a sense of purpose and helped me to focus on my research question. It allowed me to begin the interpretive process even before I encountered my research participants. It strengthened my belief that caring is an important aspect of teaching, and that a way to affirm teachers' experiences of caring would be to acknowledge these experiences and bring them out into the open.

Choosing a Way to Proceed

Hermeneutic or interpretive research is interested in exposing our lived experiences in order to deeply understand our lives (Caputo, 1987; Jardine, 1992a; Smith, 1991). Hermeneutics is sensitive to the nuances of our experiences and it is concerned with maintaining their integrity. Interpretive research appeared to be a way of exploring the question of caring with care.

My research involves exploring teachers' experiences of caring, thus, I must acknowledge the importance of phenomenology and its relationship to hermeneutics. What I find most appealing about phenomenology is the way in which it,

> in its founding gesture, is a form of inquiry which requires a "letting be" of things just as they give themselves in our experience, and a profound and meticulous attentiveness and care in attempting to speak, to say, to save this wild integrity of experience. (Jardine, 1992b, p. 63)

Edmund Husserl's notion of intentionality was extremely important to the evolution of phenomenology and hermeneutics. This notion helped me to decide where to place the focus of my research. Intentionality suggests that an experience is always an experience *of something*. Therefore,

> we never think or interpret "in general" as rhetorical activity that bears no necessary connection to the world at large. Rather, thinking and interpreting are always and everywhere precisely about the world. I cannot abstract thinking itself out from what it is that I am thinking about. (Smith, 1991, p. 191)

An inquiry into the experience of caring is about caring. It is not about teachers' experiences in general as if the teachers in the study are the topic. Caring is the topic,

the research participants are not. The teachers and myself are present in the study but it is the topic that holds us all together; it gives us a common purpose.

When I told the teacher participants that they would not be the *objects* of the study they both appeared relieved and more relaxed. I told them that, therefore, the study was not about deciding whether or not they are caring teachers, as if the title researcher affords me the right to do so. I explained that an inquiry into lived experience is opposed to objectifying things, (especially people); it is interested in bringing things back into relation with one another. I told them that my intent was to explore the topic of caring with their help, in order to better understand its place in teaching.

The notion of intentionality also implies that as human beings we have a shared understanding of experiences; our experiences are not just our own; they belong to the world that we share with others. Thus, it would be fair to assume that the phenomenon of caring is not foreign to teachers, that all teachers would likely have something to say about what caring means to them. Phenomenological inquiry assumes that, "we *already* have [a] deep, unvoiced kinship" (Jardine, 1992a, p.51) and we are able to recognize the familiarity in other's experiences. Phenomenological inquiry provides us with the opportunity to bring to voice experiences which may not be readily heard over the loud and sometimes overpowering sound of the "grand narratives" of our world (Smith, 1991, p. 199). It is, thus, important to expose teachers' experiences because what teachers actually do may be drastically different from what the public perceives teaching to be.

I was not surprised that both teachers were eager to share their experiences; they believed that their experiences were important and that they deserved to be heard.

My conversations with the teachers provided a doorway into the question of caring. Their experiences, as shared through their stories helped to keep me grounded in the lifeworld. I understood first hand the value of narrative, how it retains the depth and complexity of lived experience in a way that no abstract conceptualized description can. The use of narrative helped me in my attempt to understand caring ontologically, as an aspect of being in the world. It was never my intent to describe the essence of caring, to find out what it *really* means to teachers. Yet, Husserl believed that describing the essence of something is the goal of phenomenology. He assumed that it is possible to achieve truth--a truth that exists in the world, independent of the individual inquiring about truth, that the inquirer could somehow step outside the world of inquiry. Thus, to search for essence, assumes that the lifeworld is static, that it is possible to describe the characteristics of caring once and for all.

Even though phenomenology influenced the development of interpretive research, interpretive research does not carry all of the Husserlian baggage. Heidegger's (1962) Being and Time turned away from Husserlian phenomenology towards hermeneutics. Heidegger introduced Hermes, the symbol of the interpretive play between message and message receiver, to phenomenology, though he assumed that Hermes was always there. Thus, the notion of essence was called to question.

Heidegger showed how the act of interpretation is a primordial aspect of being human; it is invariably involved as we seek to understand our world. Interpretation always appears between ourselves and that which we seek to understand. Therefore, an essential, univocal understanding of something cannot be achieved. There is always some room for the "play" of Hermes.

Heidegger influenced the assumption that it is not possible to remove oneself from the world which one is seeking to understand. Therefore, the researcher is also part of the research scenario. The researcher affects the research and is affected by it. Who the researcher is, is as important as who the research participants are. Which is why, "any study carried on in the name of hermeneutics should provide a report of the researcher's own transformations undergone in the process of the inquiry" (Smith, 1991, p. 198). Because my experience of the research process is part of the research, who I am is also shown in the research.

Hermeneutics is also not interested in achieving the final word on something. This stand was affected by Heidegger's exploration of temporality in Being and Time. According to Heidegger, our lives and our experiences are finite. Heidegger exposed the fragility of our understandings. He exposed how our understandings are contingent, how they *depend*. He showed how the quest to achieve closure and finality, is futile because the answers we seek are always yet to be decided. Heidegger, thus dispelled the belief in a static, unchanging world and the quest to achieve a univocal, final truth. He did not conclude, however that any attempt to understand is, therefore, fruitless. In fact, he stressed that the very fragility of the world, its interpretability, demands that

we continue to attempt to make sense out of it. And we must accept that this process will never, in the course of our lives, be finished. As Jardine (1992b) said,

> The whole of one's life, of course, is never given but always coming, so very often we will find that we are precisely mistaken about our experience and its place. Over the course of one's life, experiences are shuffled and reshuffled as the emergent whole emerges ever wider. I cannot exhaust this experience through saying or grasping, not simply because the whole is too large, but because the whole is always yet-to-be-given. (p. xxi)

Therefore, we are always *on the way* to understanding, we never completely arrive. Given this assumption, the researcher must give up the quest to achieve *the* answer. It is possible to find meaning but what is found must be located within the particular context that surrounds it. It is important to locate one's understandings, to place them back into the contingencies of the world. Heidegger showed how understanding a particular phenomenon depends, that it is not possible to understand something as if it were completely isolated and cut off from everything else.

Reading Being and Time, I learned that if I was to write hermeneutically I had to face the difficulty of trying to say something worthwhile, given the understanding that what I say will never be complete. I also understood the importance of responding to the inevitable question, "If one cannot say something with finality and certainty than what is the purpose of research?"

Heidegger (1962) showed that it is possible to understand truth other than as a single, final, decontextualized phenomenon. Heidegger showed that truth is an event which gives rise to understanding. It is the eventful experience of *opening*. Thus, the experience of truth actually has something to do with the opening up of the possibility

to understand, rather than the closing down of this possibility. Truth is the event of unconcealedness, when the depth and fullness of something is brought into the open. Truth, in this sense is referred to as "alethia" (Caputo, 1993).

Because it is an event, truth is subjected to the temporal nature of our existence--it comes and goes. Thus, "there is no privileged meaning or truth of Being but only the unfolding of many meanings and truths of Being across epochs--none of which can be privileged" (Caputo, 1993, p. 30).

The intent of hermeneutic research is therefore not to provide a single truth, but an interpretation of truth that admits its own temporality. The value of hermeneutic research lies in what it opens up for the reader; it is concerned with "provoke[ing] new ways of seeing and thinking within a deep sense of tradition, bringing about new forms of engagement and dialogue about the world we face together" (Smith, 1991, p. 202). And, "the goal of interpretive work is not to pass on objective information to a reader, but to evoke in the reader a new way of understanding themselves and the life they are living" (Jardine, 1992a, p. 60). Hermeneutics is, therefore, a creative process. The researcher can never simply report things "as they are", because of the temporal nature of things, and because the researcher plays a part in creating meaning. Thus, the researcher is left with an ethical decision: How can one proceed interpretively, in a generative, sense?

Therefore, the intention of this study is to open up a conversation on the meaning of caring for teachers, to evoke in readers a "new way of understanding

themselves" and to write something familiar, something that gives voice to experiences that teachers are already experiencing.

This study should not be read as an attempt to decontextualize the notion of caring. It is not an attempt to close the book on the meaning of caring for teachers. It is just a beginning; it provides only part of the story, a story which has been coloured by those who have touched it in some way.

Sharing Stories: Working With the Teacher Participants

I did not enter the task of interviewing my research participants objectively. The way I approached this task was affected by my previous teaching experiences, by what I had already read about caring, and by my assumptions surrounding the research process. I approached the task of interviewing with the hope of opening up fruitful conversations around the meaning of caring.

The fact that I only chose two teachers to work with was greatly influenced by who I chose. I chose to work with two teachers that I had met in graduate courses. At the time of the interviews, Janice was teaching first and second grade. Dianne was teaching kindergarten which, in Alberta, is referred to as E.C.S. or Early Childhood Services. Both teachers' experiences involved the teaching of young children. I realized that this would have an effect on their perspectives. Yet this was not why I chose them for the study. I chose them because I knew that they took the responsibility of teaching seriously, that they thought about what it means to be a teacher, and that they considered issues which are important to all teachers. And I

chose them because I knew that they would both be interested in exploring and discussing issues arising from their teaching practice. I was certain that a few discussions with these teachers would provide the wealth and depth of data that I required. Yet, I was open to the possibility of interviewing others, if the need arose. And it did not.

I met with Janice and Dianne individually on three separate occasions. Before our first meeting I explained the research topic, its intent, and the methodology that was to be used. I gave them a copy of the initial interview questions prior to our first meeting so that they would have some time to live with the questions.

To open up the conversations, I asked Dianne and Janice to share a teaching experience where they felt most fulfilled as a teacher, and an experience where they felt least fulfilled. I asked them to think about single incidents, single happenings that evoke the feelings of being fulfilled or unfulfilled.

My choice of these particular questions was influenced by LaGrange and Keogh's (1995) look at images of care in the field of child care. They adapted questions used by Bishop and Scudder's (1986, 1990, 1991) work in the field of nursing. I also found Bishop and Scudder's questions to be very interesting; I wondered how I too could adapt their questions to my work.

Bishop and Scudder explored caring, phenomenologically, in the context of nursing. In their 1986 study they asked nurses to describe their most fulfilling experiences and their least fulfilling experiences as nurses. They found that the least

fulfilling experiences usually involved situations where care was inhibited; that nurses were most fulfilled when a moral sense of caring was accomplished.

Bishop and Scudder's interpretation of the nurses' experiences made sense to me, and what they discovered could be applied to the area of teaching as well. When I thought of the occasions when I felt most fulfilled as a teacher, the notion of caring was supported or enhanced in some way. And when I thought of my least fulfilling experiences caring was usually discouraged or somehow absent. I decided to use Bishop and Scudder's questions with Janice and Dianne because they open up the possibility of discussing what really matters to teachers, and of discussing experiences which may show what teachers care about and how teachers care. I found the questions valuable because they did not focus on the issue of caring alone, as a decontextualized notion. They provided a certain roominess. And they provided the opportunity of arriving at the notion of caring *through* a discussion of teachers' experiences rather than directly talking *about* caring as if it were a thing. For instance, a story which *shows* the way a particular teacher cares about something would likely open up much more than would that teacher's opinion of caring. Narrative incidents take a notion such as caring into an arena for discussion which we all are invited to enter. Thus, I chose questions which I hoped would stimulate deep, rich, narrative discussions, discussions with possibility.

I met with both teachers individually to collect their responses to my questions and I taped our conversations, as they occurred. Before our next interview, I transcribed the tapes and provided the teachers with a transcription of their interview. I

asked them to read the transcripts with the intent to expose the issues which were implied in our discussions. I told them that I would read them the same way and that we would share our interpretations during our next meeting.

In preparation for my second meeting with each teacher, I also made a list of potential questions which pertained to the themes I had discovered, in order to elicit further discussion, and to encourage the teachers to share relevant experiences. I was prepared for each interview, yet, I was not limited by what I had prepared. I did not want to be rigid about following my agenda yet I was willing to steer the conversation along a more fruitful path if it seemed as though it was going nowhere. I was ready to improvise if the need arose.

If our discussions became too conceptualized, I would sometimes ask the teachers to provide an example from their own experience. On other occasions, it became important to follow the lead of the conversation if it seemed to be taking us somewhere valuable. I tried to allow the interviews to operate like natural conversation as much as possible, because often the most valuable and interesting discussions were not anticipated. Being open in this way provided the possibility for the eventful arrival of "alethia".

I taped and transcribed two more meetings with both teachers, each time reading and interpreting the transcripts, and using what had happened before as a basis for choosing subsequent interview questions. Again, I provided the teachers with copies of the transcripts and an opportunity to comment on them. As researcher, I am not privy to the process of interpretation. Allowing my research participants to take

part in this way was an attempt to acknowledge that they are *already* involved in this process of interpretation, and that by making this process open to them, I was also opening up the possibility for deeper and richer discussions.

Interpreting Texts

Although the transcripts in and of themselves had much to say, they also needed to be *read* and interpreted. They needed to be brought into a conversation with myself, with relevant research, and with other rich, telling examples of care, which could be found in philosophical writing, poetry, literature, film, and other interpretive studies. All of these areas served as potential sources of data, sources for understanding the notion of care.

Much could be found beneath the surface of the transcripts. I attempted to read the transcripts to understand caring in terms of the way that teaching is actually experienced, rather than in terms of a cleaned up or fixed version of teaching. I had no intention to pin down the notion of caring by seeking to find out *exactly* what it is. I was influenced by Caputo's (1987) version of hermeneutics, whereby, rather than fixing,

> hermeneutics wants to describe the fix we are in and it tries to be hard-hearted and to work "from below." It makes no claim to have won a transcendental high ground or to have a heavenly informer. It does not try to situate itself above the flux or seek a way out of [it] ..., but rather ... to get up the nerve to stay with it. (p. 3)

Staying with it involved listening to the teachers not for what I hoped to hear but for the words, phrases, and stories that exposed the way in which caring is tangled up in

their experiences. Staying with it involved working with the texts in an attempt to expose the connections between what was said and what may have been implicated in the saying. It meant rejecting narrow, shallow interpretations of caring in favour of working toward an understanding that attempts to keep intact the complexities and difficulties of teaching.

The interpretive process involved bringing Janice and Dianne's individual experiences into a conversation that implicates all teachers. Their unique, individual experiences had a great deal to say about caring and what it means in the teaching context. Thus, interpretive research involves rescuing, "the specificities of our lives from the burden of their everydayness to show how they reverberate within the grander schemes of things" (Smith, 1991, p. 200). I recognized the importance of approaching the transcripts and the interviews with a certain openness, and a willingness to be struck by significant incidents, a sensitivity to the "fecundity of the individual case" (Jardine, 1992a, p. 51).

Hermeneutics is not interested in understanding the individual case as if it were cut off from everything else. Interpretive research is not a report of the researcher's individual opinion. Hermeneutics involves seeing the way in which an individual incident may hold meaning for more than the individual who had experienced the incident. Hermeneutics involves exposing issues which implicate us all in some way.

An important aspect of reading the transcripts was bringing into play outside sources, ideas which affected the way I interpreted what I read or heard in the conversations. Thus, the literature review portion of the research did not end before

the interviews had begun; it was an ongoing aspect of the research process. The literature informed my understanding of the transcripts, and the transcripts informed my understanding of the literature. The literature provided alternative ways of interpreting my conversations with Janice and Dianne and the conversations provided a concrete ground for what I read. Being involved in the research process sometimes felt like being swept away in a good conversation, in an animated dialogue between the transcripts, the participants, the literature, and myself. It became important to try to show this process in the writing of the research, to keep this dialogue intact in some way. Thus, I attempted to weave the literature and the teachers' narratives together as much as possible. The particular incidents (teachers' experiences) and the larger whole (the larger issues as informed by the literature), hold greater meaning if read together.

As Caputo (1987) said, the process of interpretive research involves the difficult task of exposing the messy particulars of life without falling prey to the metaphysical tendency to clean up the mess. As a researcher, I found this to be quite difficult. I noticed my natural tendency to want to fix things and make them better. I had to resist the temptation to, "to make things easy" (Caputo, 1987 p. 2). I also had to give up the goal of finding out what caring, in teaching, *really* means. I found it helpful to keep in mind that the question of caring as it unfolds, is never completely answered, that its meaning continues to be worked out in our future experiences.

The process of interpretive research taught me first hand what was meant by the statement that "hermeneutic research changes the life of the researcher". The research process had a profound effect on my life, just as I would assume that my life

has affected the research. Exploring the meaning of caring changed the way I look at teaching and it also affected other areas of my life where caring plays a part.

Just as I was ready to begin writing, it was time to welcome the arrival of my first child. Suddenly, living life became more important than writing about it and I gave up my previous hope of finishing my research in a few short months. At first, this was cause for some frustration and disappointment, but I soon realized that the situation was a blessing in disguise. I was allowed the opportunity to really *live* with the question of caring over a period of time--live with it in a very concrete sense.

I realized first hand the value of time and patience in interpretive work, and the importance of letting the research work itself out. I realized that real understanding of one's experiences requires time. The particular incidents which shape the course of the research often happen unexpectedly. As Jardine said,

> It takes time to dwell with such an incident and allow the slow emergence of the rich contexts of familiarity in which it fits. I can learn the ways of this instance only by taking the time to experience where it 'goes', and thereby seeing to what territories and terrains it belongs. This instance is thus not static, but rather 'leads' somewhere. Time is needed to pare it down to what readings might be fitting of its ways, but this time, in an important sense, *belongs to the instance itself.* In spite of my deadlines and desires very often fitting insight 'takes its own sweet time'. Only over this unmethodological course of time does the fecundity of the individual case come forward. (1992, p. 58)

Understanding often arrives unannounced, and as Gadamer (1989) said, "over and above our wanting and doing" (p xxviii).

It is hoped that this inquiry will provoke the arrival of understanding for the reader, that it will be "captivating", to use Gadamer's (1989) words, that it will make a claim on the reader in some way, and that the question of care may be opened up in relation to the work of teaching. This inquiry now turns more purposefully to the experiences of the participants, to the themes which were revealed as I explored the relationship between caring and teaching.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LOSS OF THE QUESTION OF CARE

Dianne and I were talking about sharing with our students the joy of really learning something that matters to them and to us. We were trying to get around how *care* is somehow in the middle of all of that. And then suddenly, in the midst of our conversation, Dianne's tone of voice changed; it became cynical and slightly bitter.

She said, "[Care] doesn't fit in with higher standards of reading and writing. It is not drill and practice. *It doesn't count*, you know. And providing an environment where a child can have that magic moment--that's not teaching."

Taken aback by her change in tone, I asked her, "Whose voice are you assuming when you say that?"

And she replied, "There are lots of them. Pick a voice, Sandy."

Something significant had been taken from Dianne. I knew what it was because it had been taken from me too.

Perhaps there is a discrepancy between what teachers know to be important and what, powerful outside messages deem to be important, like "drill and practice". Perhaps much of the real work that teachers do, work involving care and attention has been forgotten. Perhaps teachers like Dianne are painfully experiencing the loss of the question of care.

When I recognized my own experience in Dianne's words I understood that it was not that Dianne had a problem. Dianne's words hint that something in *our world*

is not quite right. What she spoke of is not just her problem or mine, it is a collective *malaise*.

And facets of this malaise have been discussed by others. When I read Taylor's (1991) Malaise of Modernity, I was interested in his depiction of the loss of broader vision, and the loss of a sense of common purpose, which is a sign of the times. And in Being and Time, Heidegger wrote of the loss of the question of Being, how, over the course of Western philosophy, the question of what it means to *be* in the world has been ignored. Levin, (1989) referred to "the negation of meaningful Being" as "a deep sense of immeasurable, unnamable loss, ... a cancer of the spirit, ... around which our collective depression has slowly begun to form" (p. 14).

The words of others--other teachers like Janice and Dianne, and writers such as Heidegger, Taylor and Levin, helped me to understand that my personal experience of loss is not mine alone; it is a sign of larger cultural, social, and historical trends. My personal experience must be read and understood in a deeper sense. It is important to understand the implications of such personal experiences interpretively. It is the task of interpretation to expose the connection between our personal, experiences and the "textures of human life in which we are all embedded" (Jardine, 1992a, p. 51). It becomes important to wonder what these incidents reveal about our lives together. Therefore, what do Dianne's words reveal about all our lives as teachers?

Dianne's words hint at deeper patterns which are being played out in classrooms. When Janice and Dianne shared experiences of discouragement and frustration the issue of care showed itself. It showed itself in its absence. Their stories

revealed frustration and disappointment, in the midst of efforts to care, when their efforts to care were thwarted or undermined in some way.

What are the deeper forces behind the undermining of care?

The Loss of the Questions of Being and Caring

Perhaps there is a connection between the lack of support for caring and the loss of Being which Heidegger (1962) described in Being and Time. Heidegger believed that our tendency to deny our lived experiences is at the root of this loss of Being. This tendency, according to Heidegger, is a result of erroneous assumptions, most of which can be traced back to the events surrounding the powerful surgence of mathematics and science in the seventeenth century. The assumptions which took hold placed mathematics and science not as one possible way among many, but instead, as *the* only way to understand the world.

The philosophy, of Rene Descartes was instrumental in promoting the dominance of the scientific perspective. He set out to "establish the newly emerging sciences on a solid footing" (Jardine, 1992, p. 24) and in his attempt to do so he also established the process of methodic doubt. He began by doubting the existence of everything and concluded that the only thing that he could be absolutely certain of was his own thinking. He separated subject and object; he separated the *ego cogito*, from everything else. Having established the privileged position of the thinking ego, Descartes allowed it to "look around with an imperialistic eye, to claim the adjacent

territory" (Barrett, 1986, p. 20). Such a position was to allow the scientist to treat the world like an object waiting to be studied.

The individual was cut off from the rest of the world, and the only access back into that world was through the use of mathematical proof, the only method which provided the certainty and that Descartes desired. Descartes believed that physical things, because they can be mathematically measured with certainty, are more real than non physical things. Thus, the question of Being was lost as a legitimate phenomenon to be dealt with. If the question of Being would be dealt with at all, it would be addressed as a question of lesser importance, a question of subjectivity.

In Being and Time, Heidegger used the concept of spaciality to illustrate the shortcomings in Descartes thinking. He questioned Descartes' assumption that the notion of physical space is the most real concept of space. According to Heidegger, the notion of physical space requires a *lived* sense of space. In other words, we can discuss the notion of physical space only because we have lived experiences of spaciality. Heidegger showed that Descartes' mode of describing the world is actually secondary; it is derivative; it depends on already having a lived understanding of the world.

Heidegger criticised the Cartesian tendency to ignore the question of being-in-the-world, the tendency to deny lived experiences unless they can be physically proven. This tendency detracts from understanding our existence. He said,

> a dogma has been developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of Being to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect. It is said that 'Being'

> is the most universal and emptiest of concepts. As such it resists every attempt at definition. (1962, p. 2)

Heidegger criticized Descartes for reducing Being to ontic definable characteristics and assuming that these characteristics represent what Being is, thus resulting in the loss of an ontological understanding of Being. According to Heidegger, Descartes' failure to master the meaning of Being occurred because "something ontical [was] made to underlie the ontological" (p. 127).

The Cartesian tendency to ignore the ontological, to ignore the question of Being, involves ignoring all aspects of lived experience which cannot be grasped and understood with certainty. Where does this leave the question of caring?

Within Cartesianism an ontological understanding of caring, would either be reduced, narrowed or flattened, or the entire issue would be ignored altogether. As Heidegger (1962) states, "if ... 'Being' is the most universal concept, this cannot mean that it is the one which is clearest or that it needs no further discussion. It is rather the darkest of all:" Therefore, "the indefinability of Being does not eliminate the question of its meaning; it demands that we look that question in the face" (p. 23). Because experiences of care may be less visible than other aspects of teaching, because caring is nebulous and difficult to define once and for all, and because caring is often taken for granted, does not mean that it is not worthy of recognition. In fact, these characteristics demand that we take a closer look. It is important that we acknowledge the existence of the phenomenon of care because it is at risk within a Cartesian understanding of teaching.

When I asked Janice and Dianne to describe disappointing experiences, when they felt least fulfilled as a teacher, the issue of caring was present in their stories. Their stories were about caring even though I did not explicitly ask them to describe an experience of caring. This made sense; I assumed that the presence or absence of caring would be an issue because the issue of care is built in to teaching. And as I read their stories I wondered about the factors which may have been contributed to their feelings of frustration and loss. Once again, I would encounter Descartes and the pervasiveness of his assumptions.

The Loss of Care Shows Itself

The loss of care showed itself in many different incidents. I experienced this phenomenon on a personal level as a woman, a mother, and a teacher. And the voices of Janice and Dianne echoed this sense of loss as they shared their disappointments and frustrations. I now turn to the task of exploring some of the particular incidents that pointed to this phenomenon; I turn to the task of reading these incidents into the world in which they occur.

An Experience that Provided an Opening

It was a personal experience that helped me to see how readily and easily the question of care may be missed, how vital aspects of our experiences, such as the experience of care, may be devalued or missed altogether, how such experiences

become invisible in the shadow of tangible, more observable, less ambiguous aspects of experience.

The incident occurred at a reunion of parents and babies who participated in childbirth preparation classes together. I was exchanging new parent stories with Susan, another new mother. The topic of work load came up; we both agreed that parenting involved much more work than we had anticipated.

Then Susan confided in me; she shared her feelings of isolation and frustration. To her, it seemed as though no one else understood or appreciated the demands of her new role. Her friends did not understand why she could not continue with her social life as it was before her baby arrived. And she was frustrated because mothering was not exactly what she expected either. She too thought that she would be able to carry on with life as it was before. In fact, she assumed that she would have *more* time because there would no longer be outside work obligations.

Susan admitted that she was tired all the time yet she did not believe that she had a right to feel this way. She wondered why she was so exhausted when she did not really accomplish anything during the day. Her house always seemed messy, dinner was never made on time and the dirty laundry remained in the same pile every day.

Susan and I agreed that caring for our children was an extremely important and valuable activity, yet why did she assume that she did not accomplish anything during the day? Why was the work of caring so easy to dismiss? This was not the first time

that I had posed this question. Feminist literature had first introduced me to it, years ago. Yet now, the question carried a great deal more weight in my mind.

It was as if Susan was measuring her sense of accomplishment with someone else's measuring stick. Her words implied that she believed in the value of caring for her child, yet there was a stronger message that told her that this work was not very important.

I pointed out to Susan that even though we don't seem to get much done each day, we are doing so much. Much of the really important work of mothering cannot be assessed or counted. Susan agreed with me. She told me how, even at night when she and her baby are sleeping she is not completely resting because concern for her new baby is at the front of her mind. We both agreed that we had to be continuously tuned in to the needs of our babies, and this was not a matter of choice, yet it was extremely important, tiring work. We agreed that such caring *is* work even though the work itself and the results of such work are not always immediately apparent.

The work of caring cannot simply be evaluated based on whether or not tangible and immediate results have been achieved. Caring involves many shades of experience, some involve overt activities and some involve unobservable activities such as the tuning in experience that Susan described.

Teaching and the Invisible Work of Caring

My conversation with Susan made me realize that an exploration of teachers' experiences of caring would be superficial if it did not include an exploration of the

elusive, invisible side of caring. In fact, I did not have to bring this issue up as an interview question; it was already there in the experiences of the teachers I interviewed.

For instance, Janice told me how she often came home from work feeling completely exhausted. I asked her what it was about teaching that often left her feeling so tired. She replied, "it's that constant effort of trying to support, guide, [and] listen." Her comment reminded me of Susan's experience of mothering. Teaching, like parenting involves constantly expending energy in order to respond to the needs of one's students. As with parenting, teaching involves a similar sort of tuning in and a giving of oneself that does not necessarily involve overt gestures.

One example of such giving, is what Janice called teaching and guiding *from behind.* Janice found this to be a very important yet challenging aspect of teaching. She told me,

> You're always problem solving with kids and you're not trying to give them answers. You're trying to help them through and find answers. It's really hard. I find, the easiest thing is just to tell them, "Here's the answer." But that's not what we're there for. It's really hard to hold back and guide someone through something from behind [pause] when you've got fifty of them who need that all day. I think that is what's tiring.

It was Janice's concern for her students that encouraged her to teach *from behind.* When Janice chooses to stand back to watch a student struggle through a problem, her concern for that child may not be obvious to the outside observer.

Janice's action may be based on careful consideration of what is best for that particular child at that particular point in time. Teaching from behind may require a great deal of effort; it may be difficult work even though, on the surface, it may not appear to be.

As Janice's example shows, caring in the context of teaching, is sometimes hidden from view. Her description of the continuous effort involved in teaching reminded me of Susan's experience of tuning in to her child. And Janice's example also demonstrates how, in caring, the care giver sometimes becomes less visible by holding him or herself back for the benefit of the one being cared for.

The Pressure to Produce

Is the work of caring valued less because it is less obvious and observable than other aspects of teaching? Susan did not feel her tiredness was justified when she did not accomplish anything tangible. Do teachers also experience a pressure to "produce" at the expense of valuable, but less noticeable activities?

During one of our conversations, Dianne made a sarcastic comment that first struck me as cynical and bitter. Yet her words stung; they were all too familiar with me. She said, "*Everybody* knows that children don't learn anything in E.C.S." What Dianne implied was that she did not feel respected and valued as a kindergarten teacher.

At the time of our discussion, the E.C.S. program in the province was facing massive budget cuts and this intensified her feelings of discouragement. I asked her

what the budget cuts meant to her and she responded, "[It means] that young children don't have any value and that they don't learn anything in E.C.S." Dianne believed strongly in the value of her work as a kindergarten teacher, yet she often felt as though no one else did. She told me, "Why should I put in such an effort when no one else sees the value in it?" It is extremely difficult to care when the question of caring has been removed from most educational and political discourse.

Dianne shared an example of two different understandings of teaching: one, an approach concerned with surface appearances, which Dianne believed to be most readily supported, and another less obvious approach which she believed is not usually recognized or readily supported. She illustrated the differences between both teaching approaches by describing an activity that she had been working on with her students.

Shortly before Thanksgiving, Dianne's children painted their hands and then pressed them onto paper to make turkeys. When they were finished, Dianne looked at the activity and thought that even though the children ended up with a product that looked good, they really did not learn much from the activity. Not a lot of work went into the activity, yet if it was left at that, Dianne believed that most of the children's parents and most of her colleagues would be satisfied because it resulted in a product which looked good.

Yet Dianne was not satisfied with such an approach. She wondered how the activity could be extended to provide more opportunities for learning. So she asked her children, "Where do you think this turkey could live?" She told me how one little girl decided to create a farmyard for her turkey. So Dianne talked to the child about the

farmyard and helped her to gather the materials she needed to build one. Dianne continued this discussion with her children over the next week, and was quite impressed with the creative responses that she received from them. Dianne enlisted the help of parent volunteers, to assist the children in gathering the materials that they needed to make their creations. Parents also were on hand to write down children's descriptions of their work, as an attempt to show the depth of thought and imagination that went into the creation of their projects. Because of the scope of the activity, only a few children were able to work on it at a time, and the project continued two weeks after Thanksgiving had passed.

Dianne did not think that her students really learned much by simply pressing their hands on paper and cutting out the shape. Yet, to her, this was an example of the type of activity that is expected and recognized, especially in the early elementary grades, because it makes presentable and obvious what was taught (following instructions, how to use paint, how to cut) and whether or not these teaching objectives were learned. Dianne's extended project involved creating a product that was measurable to a certain extent, but the depth of her students' learning was not always reflected in the product. This did not mean that Dianne valued the process alone; her goal was for each child to create something: a visual story, a depiction that involved a great deal of thought. Yet, she realized that the interesting discussions that the activity provoked and the imaginative stories that the children told orally were not always represented in what was produced.

Dianne suggested that what kindergarten teachers do may be less valued because kindergarten children are less able than older children to produce evidence of what they learned. For instance, many preschool aged children can not perform measurable skills like reading or writing. Yet Dianne believed that the pressure to engage in tasks that are simply product oriented undermined her efforts to encourage deeper learning in her students.

Dianne's story was similar to Susan's and Janice's stories. For some reason, concrete, product oriented activities seem to be noticed and supported more than other, less visible activities. This tendency may be related to what Heidegger (1962) called the desire to make things "present-at-hand". And this tendency may contribute to the sense of frustration and futility that teachers may experience when their real work is assumed to be secondary to the push for tangible outcomes. Caring, committed teachers, other than Dianne, may also be asking themselves, "Why should I care when no one else notices or supports my efforts?"

The Tendency to Make Things Present-At-Hand

Heidegger referred to the Cartesian tendency to equate the existence of something with objective, listable, characteristics making something "present-at-hand". He showed that in doing this something is lost; it is a narrowing of understanding. According to Heidegger, it is the ontological question, or the question of being which is lost.

For Descartes, the existence of something could not be proven unless it could be made present-at-hand. In other words, Being, the existence of something, can not be proven unless it constantly remains as it is. And the only way to be certain of constancy is through the use of mathematical and physical proof.

This Cartesian assumption seems more reasonable when it is applied to the world of things. Yet, within the Cartesian modality *anything* which cannot be accessed and understood with the assurance of being present at hand, is passed over. Descartes treated the Being of human existence in the same way he treated the Being of objects in the world.

An acceptance of these assumptions would mean that one could not be certain about the existence of most of our human experiences because they cannot be explained in quantifiable terms. The ever changing, temporal, contingent nature of our experiences, would make the existence of these experiences questionable and it would make understanding them nearly impossible. Unless of course, the experiences are understood in the same way we would describe the attributes of a chair or a desk.

Cartesian assumptions lead us to either flatten the depth of our experiences by making them present-at-hand or to forget their importance. It would seem, from the teachers' narratives that experiences of caring are subject to this Cartesian tendency. Experiences of caring seem to be either oversimplified or dismissed as merely subjective aspects of teaching.

Yet as teachers we know that these discounted experiences are very important. The existence of care makes a difference. Again, it is helpful to be reminded of

Heidegger's (1962) comment that the indefinability of something does not eliminate the question of its meaning, "it demands that we look that question in the face" (p. 23).

Heidegger criticized modern philosophers for inadequately dealing with ontological questions when he stated, "that which the ancient philosophers found continually disturbing as something obscure and hidden has taken on a clarity and self-evidence such that if anyone continues to ask about it he is charged with error of method" (p. 2). Which is why we would all be able to define the term care, yet our definitions would not perfectly reflect our experiences. The meaning of caring can only be found in the depth of our experiences and meaning shifts as our experiences shift. Through our experiences, we *know* what it means to care because caring is an integral part of our lives. Has the Cartesian desire to make things present-at-hand contributed to the low status of caring, within the teaching profession? Has it contributed to our need to produce tangibles, and our tendency to believe that if we do not have something to show for our experiences, then they are not worthy of our attention? *Achievement tests*, *learning outcomes*, *performance indicators*, and *accountability* are terms which carry a great deal of weight in our school systems, yet these terms may be used as a means to make deeper, more complex experiences present-at-hand. The tendency to make things present-at-hand may have pushed much of what teachers do into the shadows.

Susan's experience of caring for her baby, was real, and it involved difficult, exhausting work even though her work could not be observed or physically measured.

And much of what teachers do can not be made present-at-hand without distorting and flattening the depth and integrity of their work. The effort involved in teaching and in caring for one's students does not always involve overt actions. Caring may even be present in an action which, if taken out of context, would appear to be uncaring. Understanding caring requires the ability to look into the complexity of life in the classroom and to consider the broader context that gives meaning to a particular action or incident.

The pressure to produce perfect looking crafts, which Dianne experienced, was also connected to the Cartesian desire to make things present-at-hand. Her story hinted at how, in schools, the *appearance* of learning can become more important than actual learning. Since kindergarten children are less able to perform measurable tasks, one might make the assumption that they are not really capable of learning anything in kindergarten. This assumption may also lead to the reduction of teaching to simple, measurable activities at the expense of more interesting, and challenging activities. The care involved in promoting deeper learning can be left unrecognized and unsupported in favour of teaching and learning activities which are more present-at-hand.

The act of caring cannot be pinned down; it cannot be secured and understood with certainty. Therefore, it is easier to forget and dismiss the existence of caring and focus instead on something more graspable. This may explain why for some, evidence of good teaching may be found in shiny display boards and plastic perfect classrooms. Just as the *appearance* of learning is sometimes encouraged more than real learning, as it was in Dianne's story, the caring actions of teachers may not be encouraged and

supported the way that more observable, measurable teaching behaviours are. The desire to make present-at-hand may be one of the factors resulting in the minimalization of caring as an important and valuable aspect of teaching.

The Worship of Numbers

Another factor which may be thwarting the caring efforts of teachers is the importance that we tend to give numbers as proof of something's worth. The thinking usually goes like this, "the greater the number attached to a thing, the greater the value of that thing." The numbers themselves may even take on a life of their own, apart from the thing that they are supposed to represent, which is another example of how physical proof, (in this case, in the form of numbers) can become more important than the real thing.

This issue arose in a conversation that I had with Janice. She was sharing a teaching experience in which she felt unfulfilled and frustrated. She was pressured into involving herself and her students in a program that she did not agree with.

Her teaching colleagues had decided almost unanimously, yet without her approval, to begin a program called "Super Kids" with all of the students in the elementary school. The purpose of the program was to improve motivation and achievement through the use of goal setting. Even though Janice did not agree with the philosophy of the program, she decided to "make the best of it". It seemed to be her only option at the time.

The program, as Janice described it, was intended to improve motivation and classroom achievement. Teachers were to help their students set goals and work towards achieving them. At the end of a two week period, those students who reached their goal were presented with a framed certificate at a school-wide assembly. Janice did not agree with the use of external reward systems, and, in her words, "reaching an important goal should be enough of a reward." Only a percentage of the students in the school were *allowed* to achieve the award, which, according to Janice, was a ridiculous rule because it was quite possible that more students than the rule allowed would be successful. She told me,

> I thought, O.K., we're going to do this ... and, we're going to do this the best way we can. No one would get upset if you had more than--well they might--but oh well, whatever. No one's going to get really angry at you if one hundred percent of your kids got it. No one's really counting.

At the end of the two week period, twelve of Janice's students achieved their goals. When she submitted her list of successful students, she was told that only four were allowed to achieve their goal. Janice had to go back to her students and explain the situation. She dreaded doing this, it made her feel like a hypocrite. She had to explain to her students that only four of the twelve could receive the award. "I felt like I was making Sophie's Choice, sort of," she told me. Janice was resentful and angry at herself for not standing behind her own beliefs. She said,

> I'm mad at myself. I felt really terrible that I didn't push it further. You know, you're stuck sort of, but who is

> most important? I kept coming back to the kids. They don't have any power in this situation. I should have pushed it and stuck with it for them and I didn't. I feel like I let them down.

Janice disliked the rigidity of the program, and how the appearance of achievement was more important than actual, real achievement. In this case, the mathematical representation of what actually occurred in the classroom became more important than the real thing. Janice's story is another example of how the mathematizable world, the world of certainty, repeatability, and univocity, has been assumed to be the *real* world. And, as Heidegger (1962) points out, such Cartesian assumptions have,

> narrowed down the question of the world to that of Things of Nature [Naturdinglichkeit] as those entities within-the-world which are proximally accessible. He [Descartes] has confirmed the opinion that to *know* an entity in what is supposedly the most rigorous ontical manner is our only possible access to the primary Being of the entity which such knowledge reveals. (p. 133)

The only way to know what students have learned is through the use of mathematical means which impart a sense of certainty and control.

When Janice asked why, not more than the specified number of the students were allowed to achieve a goal, she was told, "Because it would *seem* too easy to get." When Janice told me this, I could not help but think about how strange this reason sounded. It was assumed that students only achieve goals when someone else, namely a teacher says so. Achieving goals becomes externally controllable. Yet according to Janice, real achievement cannot be predetermined and controlled in the way that this

program was intended it to. It was her belief that all students are capable of achieving personal goals even though each student's goal may be unique. She believed that all students should be challenged; all should strive to achieve something worthwhile. And Janice believed that it is her job, as a teacher, to see to it that they do.

The Quick Fix

When I asked Dianne to describe a teaching situation that left her feeling frustrated, she told me about one of her previous students, a boy named Brian. When Brian was in her class, Dianne was deeply concerned about his behaviour. She told me about how Brian was unable to control himself, how he would violently lash out at other children, unprovoked. Dianne made it her first priority to get to know Brian's parents so that she could better understand Brian and his situation. When she visited Brian's home she was greatly disturbed. She told me, "Another problem that he has is [pause], I think his father is a sadist. The behaviour that I've seen his father demonstrate is [pause] sadistic". Her visit to Brian's home helped her to better understand his behaviour in her classroom.

Over time, Dianne established a constructive relationship with Brian's parents. She urged them to seek outside support for Brian and themselves. And as time passed, Brian's behaviour at school seemed to improve. Yet, just as Brian began to make some real positive strides, the school year was ending and it was time for him to leave her classroom.

Dianne worried about Brian's fate. She did not want him to slip back into his previous behaviour and she hoped that his next teacher would cultivate a relationship with his parents as she had done. She hoped Brian and his family would continue to receive support from the school system and especially from his future teachers.

Dianne was saddened, although not surprised, by Brian's situation in grade one, the following year. Brian spent most of his time in time-out, sitting in the hallway outside of the principal's office. Also, it was brought to Diane's attention that Brian was placed on medication to help control his behaviour. Dianne felt extremely uncomfortable with his situation, both the overuse of time-out and the use of medication to control his behaviour. She felt especially uncomfortable with how Brian's teacher and his parents believed that the medication was the solution to his problems. It was Dianne's belief that the use of drugs, especially in the case of young children, may have far reaching and hidden dangers even though they may seem to be perfectly safe at the time. In her words, Brian was "putting poison into his body" and the medication was possibly doing "irreparable damage to him physically".

Dianne's words echoed her feelings of helplessness, anger and frustration. It was not simply the medication that bothered her. It was the blind faith in the use of the medication as a miraculous cure for Brian's problems and how no attempt was made to uncover the root of Brian's difficulties. I asked her why she thought the school so readily supported treating children's behaviour problems in this manner. I hoped to understand what Dianne believed was the school's ideology, its underlying philosophy. In her opinion, schools place the highest value on intellectual growth and

achievement without recognizing the importance of other aspects of a child, and without realizing that these other aspects affect how well a child does in school.

The belief that the intellect is at the top of a hierarchy which separates the human being into many different components, is not a new phenomenon. This thought can be traced back to philosophers such as Descartes, and Kant who "extracted the mind from its world" (Barrett, 1986, p. 17). For these philosophers, the only legitimate way to reconnect with the world is through thought. The problem with this belief is that it ignores the full self, the "concrete self, with all its physical, sensuous and emotional life" (Barrett, 1986, p. 18). The intellectual aspect of human experience is drastically cut off from all other aspects of experience.

It would seem, from an exploration of Dianne's story, that this hierarchal ideology lies beneath some of the assumptions governing school culture. When school systems promote the development of the intellect without acknowledging other aspects of human experience, the Cartesian ideology is at work. Yet it seems that teachers know that this assumption is lacking. Take, for example, my own teaching experience. I can recall Derek, one of my first grade students, having difficulties concentrating during a mathematics drill. I later discovered that the night before, Derek's mother and father separated. How could I assess his abilities without taking his emotional state into consideration? I agree with Barrett (1986) when he argues that, "the psyche, or soul [of the individual] turns out to be very much more than reason" (p. 19). In concrete experience mind is much more than intellect and there is no separation between body and mind. As Barrett further asserts, "the body we know is rarely

sharply distinguished from the soul: in our moods and feelings we are not often sure what part is physical and what is not. There is no sharp dividing line between" (p. 20).

Dianne may be on to something in her suspicion of the premium which is placed on the intellect. The fragmentation of the individual and the separation between individual and world, are based on inadequate assumptions which may contribute to behaviours that may harm children like Brian, rather than help them. Can we really be sure that Brian's medication is not doing unforseen damage to him physically? Is the correction of his behaviour worth the risk? Is it best to look for the source of Brian's problem in only one place, his physical body? What about his emotional body, and those factors contributing to it? What about his world, those factors which may have contributed to his problem yet lie "outside" himself? For instance, the larger social environment, his classroom environment, and his home life may all hold clues to understanding his difficulties. Dianne described Brian's situation further:

> Brian is still in time-out all the time, living in the hallway by the office, out of class, not being challenged, not being stimulated, in spite of the drug. And one afternoon last week, he had a big blowout. He was hitting somebody and the teacher put him in time-out and he was crying and crying. She said, "Why are you crying?" And he said, "Those pills are supposed to turn me into a good boy. I'm supposed to be a good boy when I take those pills and they're not working."

Brian's own words loudly exclaim the inadequacies of his situation. Even Brian was led to believe that a magic pill could cure him, yet unfortunately he suffered the

most because of the limitations of this belief. The search for the single cause of Brian's problems and the blind belief that medical technology would be able to provide a single cure led his parents and teachers to ignore the deeper implications of the issue. Yes, an attempt was made to cure him, but was he adequately cared for? The quick and easy solution left Brian alone with his problems, and without the help of a caring adult.

Further Remarks

The feelings of loss and frustration expressed in Dianne and Janice's stories are not merely coincidental, they are related to a certain way of thinking, a set of beliefs, which in their worst form,

> equate reason and justice with power, repress the body of feeling, deny the life of the spirit, reduce the Self to an ego which is socially adaptive but fragmented and self alienated, and empty[s] the Self and its world of all meaning and all value. (Levin, 1989, p. 11)

The desire to make things present-at-hand discouraged Janice and Dianne's caring efforts. Their experiences of caring seem to be hidden and less visible than certain other experiences. In their stories it seemed as though caring was not encouraged. For instance, it became difficult for both teachers to encourage deep and careful thought in their students. Janice had to struggle to treat her students as individuals capable of achieving meaningful goals. The mathematizable results of the achievement program became more important than the people involved in it. Janice's students became objects to be measured and controlled. This type of thinking also contributed to

Dianne's frustrations with Brian's situation. The use of such mechanistic thinking seemed to encourage the desire for a quick fix to Brian's problems, at the expense of providing care.

It would seem, from Janice and Dianne's experiences that the presence or absence of care was deeply felt. Their stories show that caring is *connected* to the act of teaching; it is not something that is simply added on after the fact.

It was Descartes who established the belief that our subjective experiences are simply added on to our objective experiences. This split, between subject and object, which we take as common knowledge is an artificial assumption, a way of looking at the world, which greatly affects how we live, and greatly affects the lives of teachers and children.

Descartes' split between subject and object was useful in establishing a solid scientific method. The radical separation between the thinking subject and the world (an object to be measured) helped to shape our western civilization with all of its incredible technological advancements. Yet Descartes mistakenly assumed that the existence of anything which cannot be proven mathematically is questionable. These questionable entities became understood as personal subjective qualities, rather than understood to be real and necessary aspects of our existence. Non quantifiable qualities such as caring, and uncaring, beautiful and ugly, useful and useless were placed in the realm of *values*, mere additions to the "real", objective world. As Hillman (1995) said, Cartesianism, "abetted the murder of the world's soul" (p. 107).

Under Cartesian assumptions caring is placed in the subordinate position of feelings; it is understood to be something opposed to more "objective" experiences. My own experience as a mother and as a teacher, and the experiences of Janice and Dianne show the limitations of the Cartesian duality. In our actual experiences there is no dividing line between subjective and objective. We teach. We listen to our students when they talk to us, we applaud their successes, we help them get up when they fall down. In our actual experiences the separation between thought and feeling, work and play, teaching and relating intertwine and merge. As Dianne and Janice's experiences revealed, narrow definitions of teaching and learning which only include measurable behaviours and observable, intellectual achievement, serve to ignore much of the valuable work that teachers do.

Yet, the lure of Cartesian thinking must be acknowledged.We are all affected by the tendency to slip into dualistic assumptions. The extent to which Cartesian thought is embedded in our culture has meant that I have had to keep alert to my own tendency to fall into polarized, either/or thinking. Such thinking remains embedded in Cartesian assumptions because there is no room for the in-between; one side or pole always assumes the top, thus the hierarchy remains intact. For instance, I have had to remind myself that in defending the value of caring I must guard against simply replacing components of the existing hierarchy with new ones: thought replaced by feeling (which could result in a curriculum devoid of content) and rigid measurable goals replaced by the absence of goals (which could result in an "anything goes" ethic).

Focusing on the experiences of my teacher participants has helped to keep me grounded. Their narratives stressed that one of their primary concerns as teachers is to bring their students to deeper understandings of the world, and to foster the development of their students so that they may learn to live well in this world. Their narratives stressed that they cared and when their care was discouraged they felt frustrated, thus, a sense of loss became part of their experience.

The process of un-covering this sense of loss has led me to my next important task: interpreting the teachers' narratives in an attempt to re-cover what may have been lost, to bring the question of caring back into open discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LINK BETWEEN CARE AND UNDERSTANDING

In this chapter I link the notion of care with the notion of wisdom; I suggest that understanding requires care and that understanding may be required for one to be caring.

The notion of understanding, as it is interpreted by Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1989), provides the possibility to understand the notion of caring as something which requires a certain type of wisdom--the wisdom which arises from living and understanding one's lived experiences with depth. Understanding, in this sense, involves taking into account larger implications which may be playing themselves out in the moments of our lives which require care.

Dianne and Janice's stories confirmed this. Their stories revealed that caring is not simple subjectivism and should not be dismissed; caring is woven into the acts of interpreting one's circumstances and responding well. Their stories showed that the notions of understanding and wisdom are not unconnected from the notion of care, but are rather, woven together as aspects of teachers' efforts to teach well.

This link between care and understanding was expressed in multiple ways. The task of interpretation led me to highlight six aspects of experience which link these two notions: being awake, falling away from understanding, responding well, locating the problem, caring rather than curing, and having a certain wisdom.

Waking Up to Care

Caring may require understanding one's situation well enough to act appropriately. Understanding may open up the possibility of acting with more care in the future. Yet, understanding is not something we can achieve all by ourselves. It sometimes arrives in the form of a striking experience, when the experience itself calls us to wake up. We are sometimes called to care. Janice shared a teaching experience that had the effect of a wake up call for her. She came to realize how her behaviour, was sometimes not caring and that this uncaring behaviour seemed to happen when she was in a state of unawareness, and therefore, not in a position to do what needed to be done.

Janice and I had been talking about how easy it is for teachers to get caught in the hurried fray of trying to meet numerous pressures and demands, how we often become so immersed in our own, or someone else's agenda that we fail to be responsive to the real needs of our students. Janice confessed that sometimes she shuts off caring in order to get by, that she is sometimes less responsive than she would like to be out of necessity. Yet Janice noticed how an unresponsive, closed attitude can get in the way of doing what really needs to be done. Janice told me,

> Our playground has turned into a giant mud puddle ... And yesterday, one little boy, from my class fell into it. He slipped and fell and he was soaking wet and *I didn't even notice*. And he went to gym and the gym teacher said, "Barry's soaking wet; he needs some dry clothes." And my first reaction was, "Oh well, he'll just have to wear them; they'll dry." And then I thought, "*Oh ... If I*

> *was his mother would I say that?"* No, I wouldn't.... I thought about how inconvenient it was to go and get him some dry clothes. And then I found out that two other kids were soaking wet. If I were their mother, I would not make them sit all afternoon in soaking wet clothes. But as a teacher, I'm thinking, "Oh God, I don't have time for this."

I could relate to Janice's experience; I knew what it was like to be a teacher who felt pressed for time and annoyed by the many inconveniences that make it difficult to get "anything" done. A typical experience for teachers.

Yet, Janice was able to understand this typical experience differently. Something about the experience struck her. Considering her experience from a different angle caused her to wake up, and to recognize assumptions which she had taken for granted.

Gadamer (1989) said that, "understanding begins ... when something addresses us" (p. 299). In Truth and Method, he showed how the process of understanding involves suspending our "prejudices", the pre-judgements or assumptions which affect the way we understand. In order to understand differently it is necessary that we make "conscious the prejudices governing our own understanding" (p.299), as Janice's usual assumptions were put at risk when she considered her situation from a different perspective. Gadamer described the difficulty involved in suspending one's assumptions. He said,

> For as long as our mind is influenced by a prejudice, we do not consider it a judgement. How then can we foreground it? It is impossible to make ourselves aware

> of a prejudice while it is constantly operating unnoticed, but only when it is, so to speak, provoked. (p. 299)

Janice was provoked by her experience to understand teaching differently. She became conscious of some of the pre-judgements which influenced her actions as a teacher; she became aware of prejudices which may have kept her from responding appropriately.

Gadamer (1989) used the term prejudice not as a derogatory term--we are always operating under certain prejudices, certain judgements which influence the way we understand. However, the task of interpretation involves noticing when our prejudgments are limiting our understanding and preventing us from seeing alternative, and possibly, more appropriate ways of understanding. The task of interpretation is not to rid oneself of prejudices, because this is impossible to do, but rather to bring one's prejudices in to play, as Janice did, to put one's prejudices at risk.

The ability to interpret something involves posing questions. Questioning places one's prejudgments at risk and opens up possibilities. It is this openness which allows understanding to take place. It happens when we notice that an experience is asking something of us. And as Gadamer (1989) said, "questioning ... is more a passion than an action. A question presses itself on us; we can no longer avoid it and persist in our accustomed opinion" (p. 366). Janice's openness, her willingness to bring her own prejudices into question, allowed her to understand the situation with renewed depth and it allowed her to see another possible way of being. Her willingness to place her prejudgments at risk allowed her to wake up, to notice how common teacher

behaviours may be very uncaring. She noticed how the burdens of teaching often pressured her into focusing on logistics, on simply getting by.

Janice and I agreed that sometimes survival is all that we can manage, as teachers, given the incredible demands that we are forced to deal with. Sometimes we see no alternative to what Janice referred to as "the easiest way". Yet Janice's experience made her painfully aware that the easy route is not always the best or most caring direction to take.

And understanding things better does not necessarily make life easier, in fact, as in Janice's story, it often makes life more difficult.

One of the connections between understanding and caring, then, is the ability to open oneself to the experience of understanding, the ability to be ready to understand when a different understanding is called for. It involves being awake to a certain extent. Janice's story showed how easy it is to live and work with one's eyes closed, so to speak, and it also brought forward the importance of opening our eyes when the situation calls us to do so. Being awake is a certain responsiveness to things as they are. Interpretation depends on this responsiveness; caring depends on it as well because it greatly affects one's ability to proceed well.

Janice's experience reminded me of how we spend much of our time closed from the possibility of understanding. We usually get away with being "asleep", but sometimes things happen to jolt us awake. Recently, I read a magazine article which reminded me of our tendency to be in this state of sleep. The story was a report on the dangers of spraying with toxic herbicides and pesticides. The article reported incidents

which point to the need to restrict the use of toxic spraying. The particular incident that struck me, occurred in British Columbia; it involved a young school girl named Michelle. Michelle

> died from a brain stem tumor she and others believe was a direct cause of exposure to aerial spraying of the fungicide, Guthion. Michelle had been on her way to school when she was caught in the spray from a plane flying over blueberry fields between her home and her school. (Davies, 1995, p. 18)

The story reported that the child spent the entire day sitting in her desk at school, her head burning, soaking in toxic pesticides and breathing the fresh toxic fumes.

I was struck by this story, first, because of its severity, which forced me to notice issues that I may have otherwise ignored. I understood the way exaggeration, the extreme case, is sometimes required in interpretive research, as Smith (1991) said, to complete, "the voice of the other" (p. 202). The story also left many questions unanswered. Why was the child left to soak in the toxic chemicals? Did anyone notice her? Was her teacher aware of her condition? If so, did Michelle's teacher keep Michelle in school because the incident seemed inconsequential?

Although I was shocked by the story, I could also understand how it may have happened. I could have been Michelle's teacher, caught up in my own world, too busy to have noticed her. The issue is not one of placing blame but rather of realizing how we tend to get caught up in the circumstances that surround us. This story reminded me that we live with the possibility of being, in a sense, unconscious; that we may unconsciously participate in circumstances which may bring harm to ourselves and others.

Usually we get away with not really noticing the world around us. Yet I wonder, what possibilities may we be missing when we conduct ourselves this way? What might we miss when we become rigidly involved in our own agendas?

Falling Away From Understanding

The story of the teacher in British Columbia and Janice's experience with the puddle showed that sometimes we fall into a certain way of being, a way of being that is concerned with nothing more than getting by and getting things done, a way of being which is governed by pre-judgements which are not noticed.

When I considered both of these stories I thought about Heidegger's (1962) notion of "fallenness". He called being "fallen" the usual way we conduct ourselves, a state of being unresponsive to the way things are, a state of being closed to the possibility of interpretation.

Heidegger begins his discussion of falling by describing the notion of the "they". He describes the they as, "the inconspicuous domination by Others", a prescription for being, rather than a particular person or persons. He states further,

> We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* ... take pleasure; we read see, and judge literature as *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as *they* shrink back; we find 'shocking' what *they* find shocking. The 'they', which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness. (p. 164)

Heidegger describes being fallen as the tendency to "take things easily and make them easy" (1962, p. 165). He calls this tendency an averageness, a "levelling down" of

possibilities whereby, "everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has long been well known. Everything gained by a struggle becomes just something to be manipulated. Every secret loses its force" (p.165).

And according to Heidegger, this falling of Dasein (being human) is not something which can be avoided, rather, it characterizes Dasein's everyday being. In schools, too, this the everyday way of being can not be avoided. It happens when the usual way of doing things becomes taken for granted.

Heidegger describes falling as falling away from another possibility--the possibility to be authentic. When we fall, we fall away from our authentic potentiality for being, into the world of Others in the *they*. Falling is therefore, characterized by being absorbed in the world, in such a way that we are going from this to that; it is characterized by being driven into what Heidegger calls the "uninhibited hustle" (p. 222). In a sense, we are tranquillized; we are lulled into this state of inauthenticity by the lure of the "nullity of ... everydayness" (p. 223).

Yet according to Heidegger being fallen is not a problem to be solved; it is an "essential ontological structure of Dasein itself" (p. 224). For instance, it is necessary to be fallen when we are involved in inconsequential, mundane activities, when we are simply getting from this to that. We drive to work and back everyday; we rush home to our families; we cook meals; we watch television. As teachers, we take attendance, we administer tests, we line kids up in the hallway, we try to keep our students quiet during assemblies. We do these things without necessarily questioning and noticing every move we make. Sometimes being fallen is what is required.

Yet what is required depends. According to Heidegger, we are, at times, called by the situation to wake up; we are called to react "authentically". He stressed that authentic existence is not an alternative to falling. It is not as if we are either fallen and inauthentic, or authentic and not fallen. It is not a question of either this or that.

The possibility to be authentic arrives; it is the situation that lets us know that something is happening, that we better wake up and take notice. Our fallenness may keep us from hearing the wake up call. We may become so engrossed in the usual way, the way of the *they* that we fail see what needs to be seen, as the teacher in British Columbia may have failed to notice a student who desperately needed her teacher to be awake.

When we are responsive and awake we are in a position to see beyond the limits of our personal prejudices, and therefore, open to possible ways of being which may be more situation appropriate, and therefore, more caring. Caring is thus linked to interpretation and understanding because it has something to do with the ability to respond when we are called to respond. Heidegger showed that understanding involves interpreting the things themselves, as they are given in the particular moment. He said, "When the call gives us a potentiality-for-being to understand, it does not give us one which is ideal and universal, it discloses it as that which has currently individualized and which belongs to that particular Dasein" (p. 326). The call to respond is not directed at just any one; it is directed at the one who receives it.

The following words put another slant on the connection between authenticity and understanding:

> Go on your own way, on the path you select for yourself, corresponding to your own innermost inclination. Don't accept any statement because I made it. Even if it is true a hundred times over, it still is not your truth, it still is not your experience and it will not belong to you. Bring truth into being, and then it will belong to you. (Haich, cited in Mariechild, 1995)

Acting with care involves responding in a way that is *called* for, despite universal rules, and despite what is commonly held to be true. As Heidegger said, the possibility to understand, and thus to act appropriately, arrives. It arrives in the form of a call that is not directed at just anyone; it is directed at me, in this situation. It is then up to me to own it; to bring this truth, this understanding into being.

Responding Well

Both caring and understanding are inextricably linked to the concrete particularities of life. This situation-dependant aspect of caring was again brought to the fore when I asked Dianne to explain to me what the term caring meant to her. She resisted defining the term, and instead told me about one of her students.

She told me that this child was difficult to teach; he appeared to have more than his share of problems. Yet Dianne felt protective of this child. She disapproved of the way her colleagues treated him and his family. They blamed his parents for all of his problems and spent a great deal of staff room time, to use Dianne's words, "bashing them". "His father was arrested, and is in jail," she told me. "When this bashing of his parents was going on, I would say, 'I don't think you realize that the

mom doesn't have any power in that family.' " I could see that Dianne was frustrated; she believed that she was the only teacher on staff who cared. She continued,

> You can't tell me that ... [his family situation] is not affecting him. It is all the time. He's very sensitive. His mom hasn't told him where his dad is, she just said he's in the hospital; he's sick. So every day he prays for his dad to get better. So what's caring in this situation? I don't have a general, all purpose definition. Caring is recognizing that Justin needs a couple more strokes ... When his mom comes to the classroom, if she's not in a big rush, it means saying, "How are things? Have you had any news?" Just talking to her is important because she is completely cut off and isolated. She feels a lot of stigma. Her husband's in jail and she has no support. So recognizing that she needs support too, being supportive, reminding her verbally when important school events are coming up, because I know she's got so much on her plate right now. She can't keep anything straight. That is caring in that situation.

Dianne's story shows how caring is not something that can be defined once and for all. It depends on the situation and how it is understood. Thus, the work of caring, and the work of understanding is never finished. It would, therefore, not be sufficient to decide what caring is in every situation and simply apply this method. One cannot decide how to be caring before entering the situation, because caring depends on understanding the situation itself. As Gadamer (1989) said,

> To acquire an awareness of a situation is, however, always a task of peculiar difficulty. The very idea of a

> situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it. We always find ourselves within a situation, and throwing light on it is a task that is never entirely finished. (p. 301)

Objective knowledge, knowledge which is cut off from the knower and the knower's situation, is not the same as understanding. Objective knowledge involves thinking about a situation apart from it and deciding on the best course of action for all situations like it. Objective knowledge by itself, is insufficient in most situations because it is based on a denial of the temporal nature of human existence. Because we are part of a situation, and it moves and changes as we do, it can never be understood completely because it is not a static *thing*.

This is why caring that is tempered with understanding becomes more generous and open. Dianne realized that Justin's situation required flexibility and responsiveness. She could see how much Justin needed his mother and she could see how much he needed his mother to be cared for as well. She understood the difficulty of Justin's situation and she knew that placing blame on his parents did nothing to help him deal with his difficulties.

Gadamer's distinction between knowledge and understanding helps to support my belief that care requires understanding rather than knowledge. Knowledge is not irrelevant, but rather it must serve the situations that we are confronted with. Understanding involves applying what we already know to our lives; in understanding, what we know is never removed from us. As Gadamer said, "*the hermeneutical*

problem [of understanding] ... is clearly distinct from 'pure' knowledge detached from any particular kind of being" (p. 314).

Thus the knowledge that is required for understanding is not the pure, detached form, knowledge is usually assumed to be. Understanding, and thus caring, involve what Gadamer called "moral knowledge". Moral knowledge is required when one is in need of understanding the best course of action. And as Gadamer said, "Moral knowledge can never be knowable in advance like knowledge that can be taught" (p. 321). When deciding what to do in a particular situation one is standing in the middle of it. The situation itself places demands on the moral decision, which is why understanding requires being in a situation, not simply knowing the rules about that situation.

Understanding occurs in the place *between* what we know and the arrival of new experiences. It involves the relationship between whole and part, between the universal and the particular. Yet these statements are made with caution: What we know (the universal, or the whole, in this case) is never fully given to us. Gadamer uses the term "tradition" to refer to what we already know; he mentions that tradition must be understood differently, depending on the situation it applies to. We do not take hold of the *whole* in advance and then later apply it to our situation; what we understand is based on our experiences *in* situations. As Gadamer (1989) said,

> the text [or tradition, knowledge] is [not] given [to the interpreter] ... as something universal, that he first understands it per se, and then afterward uses it for particular applications. Rather, the interpreter seeks no more than to understand this universal, the text--ie., to understand what it says, what constitutes the text's

> meaning and significance. In order to understand that, he must not try to disregard himself and his particular hermeneutical situation. He must relate the text to this situation if he wants to understand at all. (p. 324)

Gadamer's notion of understanding places at risk the belief in a static, objective truth. We are not isolated subjects applying something objective to a situation. Understanding comes from the commonality which binds us to a world that we share with others, a world which we take part in creating, a world which is never fully given to us.

Therefore, simply reasoning our way to answers is insufficient in situations requiring care. Reasoning may bring about additional knowledge but it is not the way to arrive at understanding. We have been handed the enlightenment assumption that reasoning is all that is required, that we don't really need to be involved in any way with actual situations in order to decide how to proceed.

Gadamer (1989) criticized Kant's part in this enlightenment assumption. For Kant, what is good, what is ethical, can be arrived at only through reason in the attainment of universalizable principles.

We can not simply think our way into understanding. Thinking, in the quest to arrive at objective knowledge is a fragmentation; the individual becomes an isolated subject, and the world, an object to be grasped.

This fragmentation appears even in the origin of the word, knowledge (Levin, 1989). *Knowledge* is derived from the word *episteme*, meaning to stand in front of: *epi*, means in front of and *sta*, means standing. The phrase "to stand in front of something" implies distance between knower and known.

However, understanding means "to stand under" or, "to listen from below or from within" (Levin, 1989). In understanding, one is always left in the precarious position of deciding *how one stands in the middle of things*, having a sense of the conditions that one is *under* the influence of.

Kant assumed that knowledge, which is arrived at through reasoning, is all that is required in making ethical decisions. This assumption is deeply unethical because it does not consider the place in which one stands. Such an assumption does not consider the temporality of the world, because it is based on the belief that knowledge can be secured apart from the contingencies of existence. For Kant, it does not matter that the next situation may be completely different from the present one.

Yet, according to Gadamer, everything depends on this arrival. Life is not static and predictable; it is deeply temporal. As teachers, we know that the arrival of a new child can make all the difference; suddenly old rules do not apply in the same way. Perhaps it is better to resist general, "all purpose definitions" of caring, as Dianne did, in order to prepare ourselves for changing situations. Perhaps the work of caring, involves resisting the lure of proceeding as if we have all of the answers.

Locating the Problem

Recall the story of Brian in chapter 3, and Dianne's frustration with the way that he was being treated. Brian's parents and teacher appeared to absolve their responsibility to him; they placed ultimate responsibility in the hands of medical authorities. Because the medical establishment located the problem *in* Brian, and

purported to fix the problem, the problem no longer belonged to Brian's teachers and parents, it belonged solely to him. And Brian ended up spending all of his time in the hallway, as if the teacher's work with him was finished. Dianne told me it was as if the teacher said to him, "You don't fit into my classroom. You are not my problem. You are not part of the group". Locating the problem *in* Brian may have been an act of abandonment.

Treating problems by locating them *in* individuals is not understanding; rather, understanding involves recognizing the larger implications of individual situations, that individual problems are manifestations of something larger than the individual; they arrive out of a shared world. What is required, then, is an ability to *read* the individual instance back into the world. This is the act of interpretation (Jardine, 1992a).

This ability to *read* appeared as an important aspect of caring when Dianne and I discussed an experience where she felt very fulfilled in her work. This experience also involved Brian, who Dianne introduced us to earlier, the child who was given medication and placed in time-out. This experience, however, occurred when Brian was in her class. Dianne recounts:

> There were three kids for each locker; so it was a very crowded situation, not a lot of room.... I was having problems with Brian; I didn't know how to deal with them.... He just did not seem capable of sharing a locker with anybody. I talked to him and talked to him. I changed his locker partner, in case he was having a personality conflict. I tried all these different things and

> finally one day he punched somebody. And I did something which I would consider to be punitive.

Dianne told me how she explained to Brian that his locker would have to be away from the other children's lockers. When she moved Brian's locker the fighting stopped. Dianne went back to Brian to discuss the situation. Brian appeared to understand the inappropriateness of his aggressive behaviour, so Dianne decided to move his locker back. Dianne told me,

> The very day we moved his locker back, he knocked a girl over.... I know that she did not provoke him; she was just standing close. *And it was at that moment that I realized that it wasn't his fault.*

Dianne realized that removing Brian from potentially dangerous situations, situations which he could not control by himself, was the most compassionate thing she could do for him at that time. And Brian appreciated her decision. As Dianne told me, "When I explained to him that this was bigger than he was, I think he was relieved."

Dianne's actions toward Brian were influenced by a compassionate understanding that told her that Brian's difficulties involved something larger than Brian alone. Dianne saw Brian as a sign that something was array in his family, and this in turn was a sign of greater troubles in our world. In her words, "our society is sick". Dianne pointed out that her concern for Brian could not be removed from her concern for his family and for our world. She said, "I know that in some ways our society is the cause of the dysfunction.... Society is sick and therefore the individual is affected." When I asked Dianne if she believed it is important for teachers to

understand social issues she replied by asking, "How can we possibly care for an individual child if we do not care for the world in which they inhabit?"

We discussed the difficulties involved in responsibly taking up social issues. Dianne believed that most teachers do not take this responsibility seriously enough. Yet she understood that schools do not usually promote and support this type of understanding because, in her words, schools encourage teachers to,

> teach kids how to conform, how to fit in. They do not teach kids as a general rule, to be imaginative and creative--you know, the real trend setting individuals because the trend setters cause trouble. Most teachers don't want trouble, they want conformity.

As Dianne described this tendency to avoid trouble at all costs, again, I was reminded of Heidegger's depiction of being fallen. A certain amount of conformity and adherence to social mores is necessary; it would be absurd to suggest that we should always be setting trends and making trouble. Yet, the danger of fallenness lies in its lure, in its ability to keep us from making trouble when a little trouble making is called for. And we are not in any position to do so if we never consider the way the world is working itself out *through* us.

This connection between the individual and the world is an important aspect of understanding. When Dianne realized that Brian was living out a problem that we all are living out, the problem became something that she too held a stake in.

Seeing the world in a particular child and seeing a child in the world deepens our understanding and thus our ability to proceed with care. When we feel pain for a

particular individual, we are in a sense feeling pain for our world, ourselves included. This is compassion. As Macy (1991) stated,

> When we come to the authority of what we know and feel, when we acknowledge our pain for the world, we remember the original meaning of compassion, "to suffer with". Suffering with our world, we are drawn into the cauldron of compassion. It is there; it awaits us; ... it can reconnect us with our power. (p. 32)

Again, it is important to recognize the relationship between the individual and the world, the relationship between self and society. The individual is not an isolated subject, who does not affect, nor is affected by the world. Rather, to use Macy's (1991) terms, self and society continuously "co-arise". When we feel compassion, we no longer experience ourselves as isolated and cut off from the world:

> When one's pain for the world is redefined as compassion, it serves as a trigger or gateway to a more encompassing sense of identity. It is seen as part of the connective tissue that binds us to all beings. The self is experienced as inseparable from the web of life in which we are as intricately connected as cells in a larger body. (Macy, 1989 p. 204)

This expansive sense of self is aware of the importance of other, because every other that one is faced with is part of one's own "larger body". Treating another individual with care is simply assumed. Whether or not one should proceed with care is no longer an issue. Consider this radical, deeply ecological interpretation of ethics:

> When my sense-of-self [a separate self] lets go and disappears, I realize my interdependence with all other phenomena.... It is more than being dependant on them: when I discover that I *am* you, the trace of your traces, the ethical problem of how to relate to you is transformed. (Loy, 1993, p. 500)

Care which is derived from understanding involves recognizing that society and its institutions (schools, for example) are not static things which exist outside of us. We create our social world as it creates us, and as Macy (1991) said,

> social institutions co-arise with us. They are not independent structures separate from our inner lives, like some backdrop to our personal dramas, against which we can display our virtues of courage and compassion. Nor are they mere projections or reflections of our own minds. As institutionalized forms of our ignorance, fears, and greed, they acquire their own dynamics. Self and society are mutually causative. (p. 96)

Macy's depiction of Self and society closely resembles Gadamer's depiction of Heidegger's hermeneutic circle as the movement between the individual and tradition (the world):

> [the circle] describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter. The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the commonality that binds us to tradition. But this commonality is constantly being formed in relation to tradition. Tradition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves. (p. 293)

Both Macy's and Gadamer's depictions admit that the world is temporal; it is in the process of continuous motion. Macy (1991) emphasized that, "within that mutual, causal perception of reality one is not a self-existent being nor are the institutions of society eternally fixed" (p. 98).

This notion of self and society has deep ethical implications because, as Macy (1991) said, "Co-arising with our actions, they [social institutions], like us, can be

changed by our actions. As our own dynamic processes can be transformed, so can they" (pp. 98-99). Thus, acting with care in one's own small, particular, circumstances can have tremendous power. What we do today affects what will happen tomorrow, in fact, it affects everything else in our interconnected world: *What we do makes a difference.*

For teachers, acting compassionately involves understanding the connection between the individual child and the world; it involves recognizing one's responsibility to that child *and* one's responsibility to the world because the two are not distinct and separate.

Care Versus Cure

Brian's parents and teacher were lured by the attractiveness of a solution. Placing the problem *in* Brian relieved them of their burden. They were lured, as we all find ourselves lured, from time to time, by the desire "to make things easy", as Heidegger said, and the desire to gloss over our difficulties. As Brian's story shows, quick solutions, brought on by such a desire do not make our problems disappear, as they are often intended to do, and they sometimes make things worse.

When Dianne realized that Brian's problem was not his alone, she did not use this revelation as a final answer to her problems with Brian. In other words, she did not just remove Brian from the difficult situation and leave it at that. She also accepted the fact that the problem was beyond her capacity to fix, that the problem required something other than fixing; it required care rather than cure.

Thomas Moore (1992) said that, "A major difference between care and cure is that cure implies the end of trouble. If you are cured, you don't have to worry about what was bothering you any longer. But care has a sense of ongoing attention. There is no end" (p. 19). I would add that care involves the ongoing sense of attention required by understanding.

Because care involves understanding it requires being receptive to what is being revealed in the particular situation one is in. It involves observing the situation carefully, in an attempt to understand the deeper implications of the situation. It involves the interpretive task of reading the situation back into the world, or as Moore said, "seeing the story we are in". To do this, one has to enter into the problem, in a sense. This is an aspect of care which can be found in an etymological trace of the term:

> The word care finds its roots in the Gothic "kara" which means lament. The basic meaning of care is: to grieve, to experience sorrow, to cry out with ... [instead,] we tend to look at caring as an attitude of the strong toward the weak, of the powerful toward the powerless, of the have's toward the have-not's. And, in fact we feel quite uncomfortable with an invitation to enter into someone's pain before doing something about it. (Nouwen, 1974, p. 33)

Further,

> to care means first to be present to each other.... Our tendency is to run away from the painful realities or to try to change them as soon as possible. But cure without care makes us preoccupied with quick changes, impatient and unwilling to share each other's burden. And so cure can often become offending instead of liberating. (Nouwen, 1974, p. 36)

Part of the social sickness that Dianne experienced may have had to do with how today, when care is required, cure is often substituted. When we cure something we assume that our work is over. Yet to proceed with care, one must accept the fact that even when it may appear that something is fixed, tomorrow, things may be different.

Care sometimes involves admitting the limitations of "objective" knowledge. And this may require, as Dianne told me, "seeing with one's heart as well as one's mind". I appreciated Dianne's use of the word heart. She said that *heart* contains notions of respect, love and an understanding of the greatness of what surrounds us. Dianne beautifully illustrated her point with the following story:

> It has been discovered that the lichen that grows on trees can be used to eat toxic chemicals and PCBs.... This is an example of how mother nature knows how to heal herself from whatever we've done to her.... You have to be able to say at the onset, "Man cannot do this; the knowledge already exists." And through a respectful approach to the world you can find what you need to learn. But the respectful approach is completely and utterly different from saying, "Man can solve the problem that man creates. We only need more knowledge, and more technology". We are finally seeing that man and technology and chemicals do not know how to dissolve and get rid of PCBs.

What we may be beginning to understand is the limitations of objective knowledge and the need for understanding.

Wisdom: Adding Strength to the Notion of Care

My conversations with both teachers revealed a special type of wisdom, a wisdom that allowed them to see with depth the conditions of difficult situations, a wisdom which placed them in the space of responding generatively, a wisdom that made it possible for them to be caring. Under-*stand*-ing is the wisdom of knowing how one stands in the middle of things. It is the opening of possibilities. Interpretation, the ability to *read* what lies before us, is also intertwined with the notions of wisdom, understanding and care, since it involves working out the possibilities which are projected by understanding.

Thus, caring, if it is to be understood as a way of proceeding well, must involve understanding. The connection between caring and understanding must be recognized if we are to rescue caring from it's devalued, subjectivized status, which has been handed to us by Cartesian, patriarchal attitudes. The in-between place of understanding escapes the dichotomies which serve to limit the notion of caring: thought versus feeling, mind versus body, subject versus object, tradition versus the new and unexpected, inside (the individual) versus outside (the world), and self versus other.

Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1989) showed that these Cartesian notions come too late; they come after understanding. Heidegger said, that we live in a world already constituted by understanding. Understanding is not limited to knowledge--it is understanding that makes knowledge possible. Understanding happens in our shared world, the world of our concrete, ground level existence where connections are held in

place, where we assume to know things because we actually do know them. Enlightenment notions of knowledge, which are either based on doubting all existing knowledge, except that which can be secured scientifically (Descartes), or based on the use of reason (Kant) are forms of knowledge, which are actually made possible by a more primordial aspect of our existence, understanding. At ground level, the connections which Descartes and Kant severed, remain intact.

I have called the Enlightenment assumptions patriarchal because patriarchy assumes that the "masculine" side of the Cartesian dichotomies hold more value. I agree with Neumann's (1983) conviction that, "Western mankind must arrive at a synthesis that includes the feminine world which is also one-sided in its isolation" (p. xiii).

"Feminine" aspects of our female and male existence, such as caring, have been silenced under the powerful assumptions of patriarchy (Gilligan, 1982; Griffin, 1989; Grumet, 1988; Levin, 1989). I believe that these aspects also need to be heard (and remembered) if we are to begin to heal the malaise of our modern world. We need to call to question Cartesian assumptions which place these experiences in a subordinate position, where care, for instance, is understood as a subjectivized, private state--completely cut off from the world. If we hang on to the belief that care is just an emotion that we possess, that it is separate from the real work that we do, then we become part of the force behind the silencing.

Within Cartesianism the "feminine" is associated with subjectivity, with personal, emotional states, with women only, apart from technology, apart from the

world of work. Thus, these feminine aspects of experience have become valid only in a limited sense, for instance, activities associated with care are assumed to be most appropriate in the home. Yet care needs to be recognized as a valid aspect of any human endeavour from the most nurturing, natural activity to the most highly technical. The importance of care must be acknowledged, but not as a celebration of the subjective, as opposed to the objective, because it is this Cartesian prejudice that limits care in the first place.

I have used Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer's (1989) notion of understanding as a way to show that the notion of care is not a subjective state but a way of being in the world, acting in the midst of situations, as a necessary aspect of our experiences in a world that we share with others. I have also found other depictions of care, and of the "feminine" that have not been limited by Cartesian, or patriarchal assumptions.

I have found images of the "feminine" in myths which seem to be free from the limitations of Cartesianism. Such images stress the importance of wisdom and thus they strengthen the notion of the "feminine". And these images also have implications for deepening our understanding of the meaning of care; they do not separate thought (such as imagination and wisdom) from feeling (such as concern and love).

In The Great Mother, Neumann, referred to the goddess, Sophia, as a sign of "the highest form of feminine wisdom" (p. 326). He referred to her as an archetype who, "achieves her supreme visible form as a flower, who does not vanish in the nirvanalike abstraction of a masculine spirit, like the scent of a blossom; her spirit always remains attached to the earthly foundation of reality" (p. 325). He said further

that, "This feminine-maternal wisdom is no abstract, disinterested knowledge but a wisdom of loving participation" (pp. 330-331). Also, this image of the feminine is not limited to the earth, to the subjective, the emotional, and therefore, cut off from the sky, the objective, the intellectual. This image of the feminine acknowledges care as wisdom, as an understanding which considers both knowing and feeling.

Manifestations of the feminine archetype of wisdom, occurring in the Far East also escape the limitations of Cartesian dichotomies. Macy (1991) referred to "the perfection of wisdom", as a symbol of "interdependent nature of reality". This mythical image is also sometimes referred to as "the Mother of All Buddhas", and at other times called "Kwanyin" or "Tara". In her, the dualities of sky/father versus earth/mother disappear. Her *heavenly* wisdom is linked to the *earth*, manifested in the form of compassion, hence she is often referred to as the "bodhissatva of compassion". She is often portrayed with her "right arm ... outstretched to help, and ... [her] right leg, no longer tucked up in the aloof serenity of the lotus posture, extends downward, in readiness to step into the world" (Macy, 1991, p. 113).

Compassion, the Buddhist counterpart to our Western notion of care, brings knowledge and understanding down to ground level, and brings the notion of care *into the world.* Compassion is not a personal, individual, subjective experience. Rather, this notion is borne out of the recognition that self and other are not really separate, that, for instance, when the world is ill, the individual is affected and vice versa. Because compassion is, "a sense of our shared suffering" (Kornfield, p. 25), it is not an

individualistic notion. As compassion, care immediately translates into a way of being in the world; it translates into practice.

Care holds a certain wisdom, which comes from understanding and compassion. Such wisdom is distinctly different from objective knowledge, because it cannot be wrestled free from the contingencies of our existence in the world. And when understood with care, truth is, not a preordained universal but, rather, something that occurs in the movement of life. This wisdom is not purely subjective either because it depends on an understanding of the world that one shares with others. Remembering that wisdom is linked to this earth that we walk, and that care is the work of walking this wisdom, opens up the question of care in such a way that it is deepened and strengthened.

Understanding: A Way of Caring

As Dianne and Janice's stories revealed, proceeding with care may be closely linked to understanding, *reading* the text of one's life. When understanding occurs, one is always left in the middle place of deciding how to proceed, and this decision is always connected to the uniqueness and particularities of concrete life. It involves a certain sensitivity and awareness of what is happening now, and allowing what one already holds to be true to be changed if necessary. Thus, truth is brought into being. The meaning of care is not something which can be defined once and for all; its meaning depends. In Dianne and Janice's stories, acting carefully depended on their understanding of the particular circumstances that they were faced with.

For Dianne, care involved understanding the complexities of Brian's circumstances, understanding that Brian's circumstances are a sign of something larger than Brian himself. This understanding did not let Dianne off the hook--she could not avoid also recognizing her role in Brian's situation, and the need for ongoing work and attention. In Janice's story, her caring depended on her openness, her responsiveness and state of wakefulness. Their stories revealed the connection between caring in particular situations and our larger understandings. Caring may then be understood as a "vision of connectedness" (Feldman, 1988, p. 20). Such a vision,

> is not one that disregards the power and application of the mind, nor is it one that glorifies the heart to the exclusion of all else. It is a vision that appreciates the interconnectedness of our own hearts and minds and recognizes that we have the potential to actualize that rapport in a sensitive and intelligent relationship to life. (Feldman, 1988, p. 20)

CHAPTER FIVE

LISTENING DEEPLY: A PRACTICAL WISDOM

> Listen to the past, future, and present right where you are. Listen with your whole body, not only with your ears, but with your hands, your face, and the back of your neck. Listening is receptivity. (Goldberg, 1986, p. 53).

Goldberg finished the above statement by suggesting that the deeper we listen to the world, the better we can write. In this chapter, I suggest that listening deeply may provide for us the possibility to live with care. This connection between listening and caring showed itself to me as I considered the question of care. It appeared in personal experience, in my conversations with Janice and Dianne, and in the literature.

For instance, Levin (1989) proposed that as we develop our capacity to hear we are developing an art of living, a practical wisdom. When I first read this I wondered about the link between listening, caring, and developing a practical wisdom. What is the connection between listening and caring? How can our capacity to listen support our efforts to teach with care?

Silence

Levin (1989) said, "in order to hear something, we must first *give* it our silence" (p. 232). Yet being silent is not an easy thing for most of us, and silence is

not encouraged or supported in our present culture. We live in a world that is uncomfortable with silence, where silence is often filled up with noise.

But noise may get in the way of hearing, and thus interfere with understanding. Take, for example, the noise of talk. We have all experienced conversations where more talking does nothing but make things confusing and less understandable. Talking at length about something does not necessarily bring about understanding, in fact, it may prevent us from hearing what needs to be heard. Could it be that in these situations, more silence may be required? Heidegger commented on the relationship between silence and understanding. He said,

> In talking with one another, the person who keeps silent can 'make one understand' (that is, he can develop an understanding) and he can do so more authentically than the person who is never short of words. Speaking at length [viel-sprechen] about something does not offer the slightest guarantee that thereby understanding is advanced. On the contrary, talking extensively about something, covers it up and brings what is understood to a sham clarity--the unintelligibility of the trivial. (p. 208)

Heidegger mentioned above that, "the person who keeps silent can make one understand". What is it about being silent that may contribute to understanding?

On the surface, being silent appears to be a passive state, but I sense from Heidegger's statement that the "person who keeps silent" actively chooses to do something, that the silence requires effort. Heidegger said further,

> Keeping silent authentically is possible only in genuine discoursing. To be able to keep silent, Dasein must have something to say.... As a mode of discoursing, reticence articulates the intelligibility of Dasein in so primordial a manner that it gives rise to a potentiality-for-hearing which is so genuine. (p. 208)

"Keeping silent authentically" requires being engaged in a conversation; it involves choosing to refrain from speaking when one has something to say. Thus, listening well requires work.

In my experience, listening is most difficult when my own thoughts and concerns become demanding, when it becomes almost unbearable to hold them back. In these situations, it is difficult to let go of my own needs and concerns; yet I must in order to give the other person the silence they need to be heard.

Listening is difficult when we are emotionally invested in the conversation. I was reminded of this during a visit with a good friend of mine. My friend, Carrie, told me about her recent visit with her brother--he was recovering from a serious car accident. As she told me her story, I thought about the relationship between caring and listening. It was her ability to listen to him, despite her own discomfort, that allowed her to care for him.

Carrie was pained by the sight of her brother. His face had been restructured, he was very thin because he could not keep food down, his mouth was wired shut so he had to be fed with a syringe, and both his legs had been broken. She told me,

> When I was with him I knew I had to be strong. He looked like an Auschwitz victim, so very thin, only bones. I tried not to let this affect me, for his sake. I gave him a massage, which he really appreciated. I knew that the massage felt good for him but it was so hard for me to do. I couldn't feel any muscle, just bone, but I carried on. We didn't talk at all. It hurts for him to talk. I just wanted to be there for him. After about four hours

> together, I put on my coat and told him it was time for me to go. Just then, he began to talk. He said, "You know, ... about the accident ..." It was the first time he openly discussed what happened. I knew it hurt for him to talk but I could see how much he really needed to do it. I stood there for another hour and just listened as he talked. After I left him I just sat in my car totally exhausted, completely wiped out.

Carrie's listening did not begin when her brother began to talk. She was listening as she massaged her brother's thin and frail body, keeping her own discomfort at bay. She kept her own pain from getting in the way. And she was able to give her brother the silence he needed.

Keeping silent authentically, as Heidegger called it, involves positioning oneself in a place that supports the arrival of understanding. In a sense, we have to surrender, to the fact that this arrival does not come from us alone. Listening involves being open to something that we do not already have in our possession; listening is opening ourselves up to the possibility of understanding. In our quest to understand something, if we only hear the sound of our own voice, we are closing ourselves off from what could be learned in listening to others. Besides, as Gadamer (1989) stressed in Truth and Method, understanding does not happen simply because we wilfully work to think ourselves into it. It arrives; and its arrival is not entirely dependant on us. When I give someone (or something) else my silence, I am, in a sense, surrendering. I am letting go of a fixation with myself, and therefore, I am opening myself to the arrival of someone (or something) else.

Teachers know of the importance of this receptivity. For example, to teach well, I know that what I must do at *this moment* with *this child* cannot be completely known in advance. I have to be open to the arrival of that knowledge, which will come from this particular moment. In one of my conversations with Dianne, she emphasized the importance of this receptivity. She used bridge building as a metaphor for teaching. She said,

> every bridge is different; there is no magic material to use. You have to be sensitive to what kind of bridge you need. Maybe you need a rope bridge to go to this person, maybe you need a concrete bridge to go to that person, but only the other person can tell you what kind of bridge you are going to need.

And for Dianne, listening involved telling herself to, "recognize what ... [a student's] truth is, to stop trying to impose another truth on him.... You have to understand him on *his* terms." Holding herself back, in a sense, was necessary for her to listen. Again, Heidegger's statement is relevant: we only keep silent authentically when we hold back, when we recognize when it is necessary to refrain from speaking our own concerns. Dianne told me that really listening to a child sometimes involved recognizing her own issues and then putting them aside. She told me, "It's like making space for them. You are so full of yourself that there is no space for anybody. You have to make a little bit of space." For example, she told me,

> I sometimes find myself in this situation where I have had to talk to a child four or five times about his inappropriate behaviour. Then I get angry and send him

> to time-out. And then the child starts crying and I suddenly realize that my anger is not doing anybody any good. You have to stop and close that anger because you can't hear the child when your own anger is in the way.

Spaciousness

I appreciated Dianne's use of the term *space* to describe the type of listening that supports caring. The type of listening that is spacious allows the one being heard room to be, as my friend's listening allowed her brother to be. In allowing another person room to be, are we not also supporting and encouraging their *becoming*?

The term *becoming* is less static than *being*; it invokes a sense of temporality and futurity. It invokes a sense of potential and possibility. Listening that is spacious supports another person's "potentiality for being" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 158) their becoming.

Thus, listening well may be one way that teachers support and encourage the becoming of their students. My conversations with Janice and Dianne provided some good examples of this. The importance of listening was highlighted when I asked them to describe one teacher from their childhood who they would deem to be caring. They both told me of teachers who listened to their students with a certain spaciousness.

Janice told me about her high school English teacher who passionately taught English, whose enthusiasm was infectious. But there was another quality that motivated Janice. Janice told me, "She always made an effort to talk to me, to listen to what I had to say; she never judged me". Janice told me that even though she did not

feel judged she felt as though her teacher believed in her; she felt inspired to live up to her teacher's high expectations.

Dianne spent most of her time in school feeling frustrated and misunderstood by her teachers. She believed that she was given the label "troublemaker" because she was vocal and outspoken; she held opinions, which made most of her teachers uncomfortable. Yet, she was fortunate enough to have one teacher, a Social Studies teacher, who, according to Dianne, "looked past my trouble making reputation and saw my abilities and drew out those abilities." Dianne described this teacher as a man who really listened to his students, a man who gave his students his time and attention. She stressed, however, that his attention was not focused on fixing students, as if they were broken and in need of repair. Rather, he allowed his students room to be. In his presence, Dianne felt that she was valuable and important, just as important as the other model students. Dianne described him as a teacher who, "didn't come in with a preset mind; he would just listen to you." Dianne recalled simple things that he said to her, things that made such a difference. For instance, she told me, "[other] teachers were always calling me a smart ass, but he called me smart." Dianne had a photograph of this teacher which epitomized what he stood for. It was a picture of him surrounded by a large group of students. As Dianne described, "he was always surrounded by a circle of, what other teachers would call, troublemakers." The spaciousness of his listening seemed to draw others to him; it conveyed the message that even the "troublemakers" were worth listening to.

The spaciousness of the listening that these teachers gave their students showed itself in two different ways. First, their listening was spacious in it's orientation to the future; and second, their listening was spacious in the present, expansive in its breadth and depth.

Being Open to Possibility

The way that Dianne and Janice's teachers listened to their students encouraged and supported their students' *becoming*. Janice's teacher inspired her to make English her major at University. Dianne's strong opinions and determined nature were interpreted, by her Social Studies teacher as an asset. He was able to channel her talents into worthy causes, and as Dianne told me, was able to see what her abilities were and draw them out. Both teachers were able to see beyond the limitations of present circumstances. In listening to their students they heard not only sounds of present circumstances but future potential: they heard possibilities which called to be encouraged and developed.

For teachers to support and encourage their students in this way they must be able to hear their students in a way that is unique to teachers; they must hear meanings inaudible to untrained ears, and meanings which may even be inaudible to the students themselves (Levin, 1989, p. 86).

Listening which is spacious and oriented toward possibility is deeply caring; it opens up potential. Heidegger's (1962) description of two extreme modes of caring illustrates the importance of spaciousness and an openness to the future.

The first mode of caring he described can be harmful because the spaciousness required is limited. He said, "[solicitude, which means 'to care for'] can, as it were, take away 'care' from the other and put itself in his position in concern: it can *leap in* for him" (p. 158). For care to *leap in*, the care giver (or teacher) has put his or her own cares and concerns in the space in front of him or her; thus there is little space left for the one being cared for. This occurs when our own needs, thoughts, and emotions get in the way of hearing what needs to be heard. As Dianne said in an earlier example, we can be so full of ourselves that there is no room left for anyone else. Janice shared an anecdote which helps to illustrate this type of caring:

> There's a little boy, a student of mine, called Randy; he's an only child. Randy had a brother who drowned. His mother is so afraid of losing him that she is not allowing him to live. He can't cope for himself because he does not know how. He's never had the opportunity.... I know why she's doing it; she loves him so much. But in another sense she's harming him by her actions.

Caring may be given with the best of intentions but if it fosters a dominant/dependent type of relationship it is serving no one, except, perhaps the needs of the care giver.

The second mode of caring that Heidegger described is called "leaping ahead", caring which, "leaps forth and liberates" (p. 159). The spaciousness of such caring allows the other to come forward into unrealized potential. It is freeing and enabling. In the presence of their favourite teachers, Janice and Dianne were freed to be their best selves, they were supported and encouraged to grow in ways that even they themselves were not presently aware of. Their teachers were not overwhelmed by their

own pressing concerns or by limitations of the present; their spacious listening allowed them to be open to possibility. Yet such listening is difficult work. The following excerpt from a poem titled To have without holding, reminded me of the difficulty of caring:

> Learning to love differently is hard,
> love with the hands wide open, love
> with the doors banging on their hinges ...
> It hurts to thwart the reflexes
> of grab, of clutch, of clutch, to love and let
> go again and again. (Piercy, 1980, p. 40)

Gelassenheit

The second way that Janice and Diane's teachers' listening was spacious had something to do with the way their listening invited *all* students to be heard, even and especially students who may have otherwise been labelled "difficult". Their listening was characterized by an openness which is sometimes referred to as "*Gelassenheit*" (Levin, 1989; Caputo, 1987). These teachers did not discriminate between who was worthy of being heard and who was not; they recognized the value of every student--they listened even when their students were not at their best.

For example, Janice told me how she felt valued even when she made unwise decisions, she never felt as though she was being judged. And Dianne's teacher did not exclude the "trouble makers". Because his listening included them, they were allowed to feel valuable and worthwhile.

The openness of their listening could be described as being nonjudgemental, however, a distinction must be made between the nonjudgemental attitude of

compassion versus the carelessness of apathy. The nonjudgemental attitude of compassion is a suspension of judgement, a type of judgement or decision in itself.

Janice and Dianne's teachers were not apathetic; they did not let "anything go". In fact, both teachers were described as being quite strict, in nonrestrictive sense. Their attitude of nonjudgement conveyed a message of expectation, respect and trust. Their listening was nonjudgemental in the sense that it welcomed *all sounds* regardless of their nature. And this openness allowed them to hear what needed to be heard. Their openness set the stage, so to speak, for appropriate, caring action. As Levin (1989) said,

> There is, of course, a time and a place to be judgemental [to make decisions].... But there is also great value, a wisdom we can bring into daily life, in learning a *Gelassenheit* that embraces all sonorous beings and welcomes all sounds, regardless of their nature. If, even once, we have experienced this gathering of sound, all our listening encounters there-after will benefit from the ontological spaciousness we would give to them. (p. 257)

In the above quote Levin refers to *Gelassenheit* as a form of listening which does not discriminate, which welcomes all sounds. He does not deny the importance of being discriminating and judgemental, however, he stresses the importance of making informed decisions and acting appropriately. As Levin (1989) said, the openness of *Gelassenheit*,

> clears a neutral space for good listening; it situates us in a space of silence that makes it easier to listen well and hear with accuracy; it enables us to hear what calls for hearing with a quieter, more global, and better informed sense of the situation. (p. 228)

Levin argues that hearing is a gift which can and should be cultivated, that, "our hearing can always become more responsive, more caring, more compassionate". He says that if we extend the reach and range of our listening,

> then we would hear things we had never heard before. And we would begin communicating with people we had never listened to before. We would find ourselves affected by these people, these strangers very near and very far, and our lives might be correspondingly changed. When we make our way through the city streets, we would gather up into our ears all the sounds of city life: beautiful sounds, ugly sounds, painful sounds, joyful sounds, threatening sounds, peaceful sounds, sounds of human kindness sounds of evil.... The sounds of human life, a song of mortal existence, gathering all sounds, without exception, without passing judgement.... The gatherings of sound I am trying to evoke here are gatherings that are possible only when our listening suspends its normal and habitual judgements--liking and disliking, approving and disapproving, accepting and rejecting. Since this gathering is *always* happening, whether or not we are present and aware, one may say that it is *already* taking place--that when we become aware of such a gathering we realize that it has always and already been happening. (p. 256)

Yet,

> It is a gathering that comes only when we let go and let be, letting whatever sounds forth have all the time-space, all the silence, all the openness and otherness of being it wants. (p. 257)

Janice and Dianne's teachers listened with the spaciousness of *Gelassenheit*: they allowed *all* of their students to be who they were. In this sense, their listening was deeply ethical because it was extended to every one.

This is a difficult notion to practice. I have found it easier, at times, to cut myself off from people who challenged me, who made disturbing claims on me. The

notion of compassion suggests that as a teacher, I must extend the reach of my listening to include every child, *especially* the child who I feel least attracted to. Because of their circumstances, children that come to us with labels such as "difficult" often need us the most.

Yet, we need these students as well; they challenge us and keep us alert and awake. Some of the most significant incidents in my teaching career, often involved "difficult" students. These are the students I really remember, and in a way, I feel thankful for having taught because they taught me something.

Gelassenheit is based on the belief in the value of all beings; that all beings are related and interconnected. If we value ourselves, we must value all other life in all its difference and diversity. And therefore, *Gelassenheit* is, in a sense, both deconstructive and ethical. As Caputo (1989) stressed, *Gelassenheit*, because it is nonexlusionary, "disseminates" and diffuses "constellations of power that systematically dominate, regulate, exclude" (p. 60). Because it serves to diffuse the power of hierarchical structures, *Gelassenheit* may be threatening, especially to those in positions of privilege. Caputo illustrated this implication with the example of Meister Eckhart's life. Eckhart was a Christian mystic who believed,

> the life and love of God to be ubiquitous, not confined to just a few privileged souls, not just to priests, for example, which made the churchmen of his day uneasy; or to males (he preached to women and told them that they all had the divine spark, the *Seelenfunlein*), which made these same church*men* uneasy; or even just to Christians, which made nearly all Christendom uneasy. Furthermore, he did not think that the presence of God was confined to *churches* at all.... Although a high level Dominican administrator himself, Eckhart set about

> disseminating power clusters in medieval Christendom, and for that he earned the wrath of the Curia and felt the blows of its institutional power. (p. 61)

Hierarchies, like the one in Caputo's example, are not limited to the church and to medieval times. They are a pervasive aspect of our world today, and our schools exist in this world. In our world it is often tacitly assumed, for example, that humans *sit above* animals, that men *sit above* women, and that white *sits above* colour. Tacit assumptions like these which serve to exclude and fragment, filter down into our schools. Therefore, the deconstructive, ethical sense of *Gelassenheit* that Caputo illustrated is more than a warm and fuzzy way to be. It is, as he said, an ethical principle "with some teeth in it" (p. 61) and it is sorely needed in schools.

It is needed by students who find themselves marginalized, as Dianne did, because they may be difficult and challenging or because they do not conform. *Gelassenheit* may serve to extend the reach of one's understanding of normal. For example, it may provide room for girls like Dianne to continue to speak out; it may also encourage girls who need to speak out but are afraid to, the space to do so, because *Gelassenheit* listens for the truth in every one. It carries with it a deep respect for all things.

An excerpt from the poem, Please Call Me By My True Names, By Thich Nhat Hanh (1988), beautifully depicts this notion of respect:

> Do not say that I'll depart tomorrow
> because even today I still arrive.
>
> The rhythm of my heart is the birth and death
> of all that are alive ...

I am the frog swimming happily
in the clear water of a pond,
and I am also the grass snake who,
approaching in silence, feeds itself on the frog ...

I am the 12-year-old girl, refugee on a small boat,
who throws herself into the ocean
after being raped by a sea pirate.
I am also the pirate,
my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving ...

Please call me by my true names
so that I can hear all my cries and my laughs at once,
so that I can see that my joy and pain are but one ...

Please call me by my true names
so that I can wake up .... (pp. 31-33).

Thich Nhat Hanh said it would have been easier to take sides against the sea pirate but he could not. He said, "if I had been born in his village and had lived a similar life ... it is likely that I would now be that pirate" (p. 31). He said, "Out of suffering, I wrote this poem.... I have many names and when you call me by any of them I would have to say 'yes' " (p. 31).

The poem portrays the deep compassion that is invoked when I am able to *hear* "all my cries and laughs at once", when the cries and laughs of another are my own cries and laughs as well. And, I may begin, "to value other lives as [I] ... value [my] ... own" (Starhawk, 1989a, p. 180). Hearing in this way has a certain survival value because I may begin "to see [myself] ... as answerable and accountable to those who are different from [me]" (Starhawk, 1989a, p. 180).

Compassionate listening, is listening for the potential in all others, including those who are not usually heard. Compassionate listening takes others seriously; it

pays attention. For teachers, this means hearing the potential and possibility of our students even when they are not aware of it themselves. Such a stance supports the survival and cultivation of all. I am reminded of this by Alice Walker's words: "[A compassionate world view] is very different from what we've been languishing under, where the thought is that the only way I can bloom is if I step on your flower." She stressed, "It's so clear that you have to cherish everyone ... every soul is to be cherished ... every flower is to bloom" (Walker as cited in Mariechild, 1995).

Hearkening

The type of listening that I have tried to express is obviously much more involved than our usual notion of hearing. Perhaps *hearkening* would be a better descriptor for the type of hearing which supports care and compassion. For Heidegger, (1962), hearkening is the type of hearing which understands. Hearkening involves giving other things the silence and space that they need in order to be heard. It involves hearing beyond obvious superficial sounds, it involves hearing the *being* of things in all of their possibility. It is, in a sense, an attunement to the *saying* rather than to what was said (Levinas cited in Peperzak, 1989). It is thus, an ontological capacity, a capacity which has the potential to encourage careful, compassionate action, because, in hearkening, we learn to listen to our world and to each other. We learn to respect the heart for its power to connect us on a fundamental level with each other (Heidegger, 1962). And we may learn to cultivate our capacity to teach with care.

CHAPTER SIX

BEING AUTHENTIC

> What I have realized through practising is that practising isn't about being ... best ... good ... poor ... or the worst.... It's about finding our own true nature and speaking from that, acting from that....
>
> The point is that our own true nature is not some ideal that we have to live up to. It's who we are right now, and that's what we can make friends with and celebrate. (Chodron, 1991, pp. 8-12)

Is there something about being true to oneself that also supports a care-full way of being? In this chapter I suggest that there is; and I link this notion with the question of teaching with care.

Being true to oneself, the working out of this, is not something which can be summarized or defined. Even gathering together elements of this experience and placing them under the heading "authenticity" felt limiting to me, because common place definitions of the term seem to narrow the breadth and flatten the depth of actual experience. So I have attempted to use this term with flexibility, keeping in mind that what I highlight in terms of authenticity will not be representative of what authenticity *actually* is. And I use the term to refer to many things. For the purpose of this study, this term became important when the notions of care and *being true to oneself* appeared to be linked.

For instance, I use the term to refer to: the authenticity of treating others as authentic (in other words, how being authentic may support another person's being) the authenticity of taking up the responsibility to read and interpret one's circumstances and to act accordingly, the authenticity of resisting surface, artificial relationships, and surface, artificial presentations of oneself.

Authenticity is used to refer to one of many possible ways of living in the world. Being authentic in this sense is not a goal, or ideal. It is not a notion of perfection which exists outside of us, rather, the existence of authenticity is continuously worked out. In my talks with Dianne and Janice it became apparent that in teaching, caring has something to do with this work.

The first sections, which follow, address two issues which appear in Being And Time: the "leap ahead", a phrase that I introduced previously, and, "resoluteness". Both notions deal with the relationship between one's authenticity and the possibility to support the being of others.

The next section, "Authentic Authority" suggests that real authority in the classroom has something to do with living authentically, earning one's authority through acting carefully.

The final sections deal with the relationship between having integrity, caring for ourselves, and being teachers who care.

To Leap Ahead

According to Heidegger (1962), our solicitude, or caring for others, usually falls somewhere between two extreme possibilities--care that is inauthentic, which Heidegger called "leaping in" for another and care that is more authentic, which he called "leaping ahead".

Leaping ahead is characterized by a sort of spacious openness that allows the other to realize his or her own potential for being. Such care opens up rather than shuts down.

Recall Dianne's story of her experience in school. Throughout most of her school career, she was reduced to a set of labels, such as: "difficult", "opinionated", a "trouble maker". The extremely bright, vocal, critical thinker, that I know Dianne to be, was ostracised and punished--likely because she was too bright, too vocal and too critical a thinker for her teachers. The labels that she was given closed down possibility. In their eyes, she was a "smart ass" and that was all that she could be when in their presence. These teachers focused on what Heidegger called actuality, because they took away the possibility for Dianne to be anything other than what they decided she was.

Dianne's Social Studies teacher dealt with her situation differently. He worked with an understanding of *both* her limitations *and* her potential. He was able to give her difficult traits back to her. She was given the possibility of becoming something more than what these labels implied. Heidegger described this type of caring when he said,

> there is also the possibility of a kind of solicitude which does not so much leap in for the Other as *leap ahead* of him [ihm *vorausspringt*] in his existential potentiality-for-being, not in order to take away his 'care' but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time. This kind of solicitude pertains essentially to authentic care--that is, the existence of the Other, ... it helps the Other become transparent to himself *in* his care and to become *free for it*. (p. 159)

In this sense, Dianne's teacher was authentically caring. His caring was liberating, rather than limiting.

This notion of leaping ahead also appeared when Janice talked about her relationship with one of her most challenging students. Janice told me that this child, Brent, had come to her classroom with a checkered past. Brent had spent his school career moving from school to school. Janice told me,

> Teachers have tried but it seems as though they have ended up abandoning him--giving up on him--because he causes so much trouble and he's so frustrating. He calls out and makes strange noises and he's very hurtful. Whenever someone says, "Brent kicked me," I know Brent kicked them and they probably didn't do anything to provoke him. He's very angry.

Janice was critical of his other teachers because they understood Brent in limiting, narrow, terms; they understood him in terms of actuality, rather than possibility. To these teachers, Brent's situation was no longer interpretable; he was just a lazy, difficult, distracted, aggressive child. For these teachers, Brent existed in an unrecognizable box without any possibility to escape it.

Although Janice was critical of his other teachers, she sympathized with them. Brent's situation often seemed hopeless, and he demanded so much of her time and energy. Yet, despite this, Janice continued to work with Brent. And she was able to do so because of her ability to interpret his circumstances with generosity. She believed he had a chance. She told me, "Even though he's a pain and he challenges my patience sometimes ... I want him to be OK and to be successful."

Success did not have a shallow meaning for Janice. She understood that if Brent was to feel really successful, his success would have to be earned. And Janice was willing to work with him to achieve it. She believed that if she was to provide encouragement to Brent, her actions had to reflect her belief in him. Yet, she sensed that he was not accustomed to being treated with such demanding respect. She said,

> I have the feeling that he's been yelled and screamed at a lot, looking at his history. Yet looking at how many confrontations we've had--we've had relatively few. And I think it's because he doesn't get yelled and screamed at here. He doesn't get embarrassed; he doesn't get put in the corner in front of everybody. We try and tone it down. And I believe him when he tells me things.

Janice's attitude towards Brent had the effect of leaping ahead. Brent was given his own *care* back. In Janice's presence he was given the possibility of taking responsibility for himself and the possibility of opening up the box that he may have been put in.

On the day that Janice and I held an interview in her classroom, I had the opportunity to meet Brent. It was the end of the school day and I waited for Janice as

she finished up her work with Brent. He appeared to be having some difficulty with the work, yet he seemed to appreciate the challenge. His head was down; he was working on suggestions which Janice was giving him. And when he looked up at her, his eyes reflected back to her the respect and admiration that she gave to him.

The relationship that Janice had with Brent exemplified the type of relationship Janice wanted to have with all of her students. It was important to her that all of her students were challenged. She admitted that early in her teaching career she was, at times, too kind to her students, she sometimes accepted inadequate work from them. However, she later realized that it was her duty and responsibility as a teacher to get to know her students and to expect their best. For Janice, expecting the best did not translate into measuring all of her students against the same standard rule. The meaning of *best* shifted from student to student and from situation to situation.

Encouragement was an important aspect of the care that Brent received from Janice and which Dianne received from her Social Studies teacher. There are similarities between what it means to be encouraging and what it means to leap ahead for another person.

The term *encouragement* is made of two parts: *en* which means *into*, and *courage*, which, derived from the French term *couer*, means *heart*. Thus, encouragement has something to do with giving *heart* to another person (recall Heidegger's notion of giving care back to another person). To encourage another person is to help that person live with vitality, to help that person be more fully who he or she is. Encouragement gives care back to the other person, and as Heidegger

said, the other is helped, "to become transparent to himself *in* his care and to become *free* for it" (p. 159). When someone is given courage they are freed to live with heart.

We care, so that our students will, in turn, learn to care for each other and for our world. Thus our caring, if it is to leap ahead, must involve opening up the world to our students. When children learn something significant they catch a glimpse of this opening. Suddenly, the whole world is different.

As teachers, we know that these moments of significant learning often happen unexpectedly, yet we work to create the conditions that support their occurrence. Janice told me about such an incident:

> We were talking about the universe, and we got going on the idea of the end of the universe--what was on the other side. What was outside the universe and what if our universe was really, really small and past our universe was a whole other world. And one of my kids ... I was asking questions and we were talking and he said, "Do you mean?" And he said, "Oh my God!" And he held his head and he said, "My head really hurts." He was really excited about this. He was really engaged in the whole idea of, "Wow! What are the possibilities here? Isn't this neat?" And he smiled and he was shaking his head and the other kids were real quiet--there were only about five of us in the conversation. And I thought, "This is where I would like to be every minute of the day".... I've never seen someone get so interested and excited about what they were learning about. I would like it to be like this all the time.

Janice was part of a magical event that she could not take full credit for. Events like this one just happen. Yet, Janice realized that it was up to her to support the occurrence of such an event. She admitted that she also had the power to "shut down" her students, to take away opportunities for them to experience the world in terms of wonder and possibility. It was important for Janice to guard against shutting down her students. She was keenly aware that her ideal is not always realized. She told me,

> I think in some way kids are already open and in lots of ways we shut them. Sometimes, I think, by feeding them factual information ... we close that hole.... [This was] one of those experiences where I felt good about what I was doing.... [Yet, most of the time] we're not really encouraging them to ask questions and imagine things beyond what they already see.

Possibly what Janice is hinting at is how, in schools, it often is more expedient and more practical to discourage opening up deep, interesting, involved topics. It is often easier to stick to today's lesson plan despite what comes of it. It takes flexibility, work, and time to treat well those occasions when something unexpectedly opens up.

Perhaps teachers support and encourage experiences like the one Janice described by leaping ahead, by visualizing a world that is larger than themselves, by being open to possibility. I think that Janice did this with her students by revelling in their experience of learning something new. It was important to Janice that she engage her students in challenging, meaningful discussions, which she hoped would "stretch their minds", and tap into their natural curiosity about the world. She engaged her students by being engaged herself.

When a child learns, not only does the world shift and become something different, the child is also changed. This notion was echoed in Dianne's hopes for her students. She said,

> I want them [my students] to leave the classroom just a little bit better than when they came in. I do mean better--that they are going to see with eyes that are more wide open; that they are going to be more aware, as people. [I want them to be more aware] of themselves as people, and of the world around them, and that includes things like numbers and letters--its all part of the world around them. Maybe with a little stronger sense of justice, and maybe a little bit stronger physically. [I'd like them] to leave just a little bit better person than when they came in.

Teaching with care involves teaching topics worth caring about. Both Dianne and Janice were not satisfied to simply fill their heads with trivial bits of facts and information; they hoped that their students would somehow become better people, somehow become better equipped to live their lives well. For instance, Dianne, believed it was more important to explore issues that the children will encounter in their world. She told me, "that's why I do units on native awareness instead of snowflakes or teddy bears". Similarly, Janice explored "big" questions with her students, as she told me, "questions about life and living". She admitted that this was not an easy thing to do. It was her experience that most children are not used to dealing with really meaningful issues at school. She said,

> They're sort of used to--here's one cute little activity; here's another cute little activity; cut and paste this and then we're going to make stick puppets next.... They don't really know what to do with it [more meaningful issues]. You really need to guide them and probe them and prod them along. There's a lot of skill involved.... [It] sounds easy but it's not.

For Janice, it was important to explore in depth, topics that hold meaning "not just for children but for everybody". She told me,

> I think if you help kids to identify what the big questions are and what it is that's really interesting in their life, issues with no cut and dried answers, then you can sort of hook them into asking those questions for themselves and you can help them learn how to find out answers or fill out the question a little more.... We can all explore the question together.... That's what keeps teachers interested in what they're doing and that's what helps kids become involved in school instead of just coming and sitting and having it all pass them by in front of their eyes.

The experience of caring for children is linked to caring about the world in which children inhabit, caring about social issues, caring about mathematics, caring about literature, caring about poetry, caring about art, and so on. To bring students to a deeper understanding of these things is a way of opening up the world, of leaping ahead for them.

Heidegger's notion of leaping ahead has two important implications for teachers. First, if our caring is authentic, then it will leap ahead and allow our students the possibility of seizing their own potential. Second, leaping ahead, for teachers, implies that caring about our students and caring about the world are connected; it involves teaching topics worth caring about. When we recognize the importance of opening up the world for our students, we remember that we care for our students so that they will in turn learn to care for each other and our world.

Being Resolute

> Pedagogy is only possible in an interpretable world.
> (Jardine, 1992b, p. 208)

"Resoluteness" requires interpreting and reading situations with the openness that admits that things may be otherwise, recognizing that life is interpretable (Heidegger, 1962). We are being resolute when we take hold of our responsibility to *read* life, rather than succumbing to interpretations that have already been read for us. Thus, being resolute becomes an important aspect of being an authentic person. It involves responding to the call to be true to oneself, as Heidegger explained when he said,

> When the call gives us a potentiality-for-Being to understand, it does not give us one which is ideal and universal; it discloses it as that which has been currently individualized and which belongs to that particular Dasein. (p. 326)

One is called to understand things for oneself. One is called to no longer defer this responsibility.

As teachers, being resolute involves questioning comfortable assumptions if they are no longer in service of our work with children. This is not an easy task. Sometimes when we do so we are set apart from others. For instance, Dianne told me that at her school there was a brainstorming committee which was set up so that teachers could come up with possible ways to deal with difficult situations and difficult students. Dianne offered to be on the committee but her participation was refused. Dianne believed that one teacher, in particular, was responsible for her exclusion. I asked Dianne why this teacher felt the need to exclude her and she said, "Because I don't think that she wants to hear what I have to say, and I might say something that might change her behaviour". Perhaps this is an example of the resistance to interpreting things differently. Sometimes we feel a strong need to cling to the usual way even if it is no longer beneficial. Dianne's presence on the committee was feared likely because of her reputation for being resolute.

Dianne told me, "There are a lot of people who are doing what they think is good, yet they don't have the realization that there could be other ways". I think this comment pertains to all of us at one time or another. We all, at times, find ourselves lost in believing that our way of understanding things is the only way. Yet sometimes is it is necessary, for the benefit of our students, that we recognize that life is not as closed as it may appear. Sometimes our students desperately need us to realize that there is another way.

Admitting one's responsibility to interpret circumstances is a pedagogical responsibility. And it was not until I became a mother that I realized the importance of

it. I realized that my child depends on my ability to interpret her circumstances. There were times when the whole world appeared to be telling me how to be a "good" mother. But I knew instinctively that this advise was not always best for her. I learned to listen to this instinct, which urged me to interpret advice in terms of *my* child and *her* circumstances. Being resolute was most difficult when my instinct told me to question what was most common and most widely accepted to be true. I learned that acting on behalf of my child was more important than gaining social acceptance, and I learned that the meaning of "good" mother, just as the meaning of "good" teacher, must never be understood as a set of rigid rules.

Webster's dictionary defines *resolute* as "marked by firm determination". Yet Heidegger's (1962) use of the term balances this steadiness and certainty with openness and a willingness to understand things differently. He said,

> The Situation cannot be calculated in advance or presented like something present-at-hand which is waiting for someone to grasp it. It merely gets disclosed in a free resolving which has not been determined beforehand but is open to the possibility of such determination. What, then, does the certainty which belongs to such resoluteness signify? Such certainty must maintain itself in what is disclosed by resolution. But this means that it simply cannot *become rigid* as regards the Situation, but must understand that the resolution, in accordance with its own meaning as discourse, must be *held open* and free for the current factical possibility. (p. 355)

Heidegger's resoluteness is not believing that one has a solution which will hold true over time--which will not depend on individual circumstances. When resoluteness becomes rigidness it also has the potential to become dangerous. Such rigidness may have the effect of closing down possibilities because the interpretability of life is lost.

Such rigidness may become the force behind self righteousness behaviour, when being right becomes more important than anything else. Heidegger stressed that the certainty of resoluteness must be situational certainty, characterized by an openness and readiness to understand the next situation differently if the need may arise. The certainty of resoluteness comes from having deeply interpreted a *particular* set of circumstances.

I also believe that we need to have compassion for ourselves and others as we move in and out of various degrees of authenticity or resoluteness. We do not always have the choice to be resolute, because being resolute is not merely up to us. We may sometimes need the resoluteness of others, and it may not be available.

I recall reading in the newspaper a story which reminded me how we may need the resoluteness of others and how others may be depending on our ability to be resolute. The striking article was about a teenage girl who, after keeping her pregnancy hidden from her parents, abandoned her child. It was reported that she secretly gave birth to her baby in her parent's home and then dropped him out the window before setting off to school. A passerby heard his cry, found his naked body lying in the snow, and rushed him to the hospital.

As a new mother myself, the thought of this helpless infant was heart wrenching. And I was angry. *How* could any mother do such a thing to her own child? But then I remembered that this mother was only a child herself. Was she not also abandoned by her parents and her culture because they did not allow her any space to be a young mother? She must have been consumed by an enormous fear. She was not

strong enough to face her parents, nor did she have the capacity to stand up for herself and her baby. The cruel world which instilled shame was the only world she was aware of. She could not see beyond her own fear long enough to become aware of any other possible course of action.

This tragic incident helped me to see the extent to which we may be tied to our own and other's interpretations of our circumstances. Sometimes we cannot be resolute all by ourselves. For instance, we may not see how we may be damaging ourselves or others; we may need to be rudely awakened. Sometimes we need the help of others. For those who need others the most, namely children, this issue is even more crucial. The young mother in this story needed her parents to notice her and to stand beside her, to help her make sense out of her circumstances.

To some degree, and at one time or another we are all caught in rigid cultural prescriptions. Yet, as adults, it is our responsibility to question and interpret damaging beliefs. The notion of resoluteness offers the possibility of breaking free from the dangerous hold of such beliefs and practices.

According to Heidegger, we are being resolute when we seize possibility. Yet, he stressed that possibility is not totally open and infinite, possibility is determined by factical circumstances. Resoluteness involves taking hold of what is possible given the understanding of these particular circumstances. Therefore, to be resolute one must be able to deeply understand the situation at hand.

The film Lorenzo's Oil is a reminder of the importance of deeply reading one's circumstances. It is based on a true account of two parents whose resoluteness saved

their son's life. Their son, Lorenzo, had a rare disease, for which the medical establishment had no cure. Lorenzo's parents did not blindly accept the hopeless prognosis that doctors gave their son. They looked into the question for themselves. They spent long hours in the library doing research, they sought out individuals who could help them deepen their understanding. They assumed responsibility for their own understanding of Lorenzo's circumstances. When they began to discover other ways to deal with Lorenzo's illness, the establishment did not support them. When they confronted other parents with their discoveries and their questions, most of the other parents did not want to hear what they had to say; most of the other parents had already given their personal authority completely over to the medical establishment. And Lorenzo's parents watched these parents accept the deaths of their children without question.

Lorenzo's parents were not able to cure Lorenzo; the effects of the disease had already left a permanent mark on him. Yet their courage and tenacity, their resoluteness, led to a discovery which made it possible for Lorenzo to live; it made it possible for others to avoid further degenerative affects of the disease.

Being resolute does not necessarily guarantee that one will achieve the result that one may have hoped for. Yet it is a way to face one's circumstances with courage, to take hold of one's responsibility to interpret one's circumstances. It makes it possible for one to act more fully on behalf of oneself or others. When one is resolute, and true to oneself, one is also in a position to be true to others. As Heidegger said,

> Dasein's resoluteness towards itself is what makes it possible to let the Others who are with it 'be' in their own most potentiality-for-being, and to co-disclose this potentiality in the solicitude which leaps forth and liberates. (Heidegger, 1962, p.344)

In other words, one's resoluteness towards oneself makes it possible for one to truly support the being of another.

When we have the courage of resoluteness, we have the courage to speak and act on behalf of our students. Children do not yet have the voice and capacity to speak for themselves (of course, this capacity varies depending on the age and maturity of the child). Children need the adults in their lives to be their voice, to speak and act on their behalf; they, "require special protection and care so that nothing destructive may happen to them from the world" (Arendt, 1954). Thus, it is important that teachers authentically interpret and respond to circumstances, that teachers read situations for possibility, that teachers take hold of their responsibility to act on behalf of their students.

Authentic Authority: Earned Respect

> ... pedagogical authority flows from ... the wisdom of having lived well, from the being that deeply understands what it is to live truly.... Authority so understood is not concerned with delegating or sharing power, as if it were a commodity, but rather it leads us to understand authority in terms of the wisdom that comes from having lived well as a very human being. (Aoki, 1991, p. 45)

There is a certain amount of authority that is automatically given to us when we accept the title *teacher*. Yet, as Aoki's quote above points out, *real* authority is not a

given. Real authority is earned by learning from one's experiences, gaining understanding and wisdom. And part of this wisdom comes from knowing that one's authority is not a permanent prize but a gift that must be continually earned. The important question here is not whether or not teachers have authority, but rather, how teachers use their power and authority.

When Janice and I discussed this issue, she stressed the importance of being responsible for her students, letting them know that she had the important role of making decisions on their behalf. She told me,

> They [the students] need to know that, ultimately someone has to be in charge. There has to be someone who can say, "that's acceptable," or, "that's unacceptable," or, "that's not safe; you're going to get hurt."

Both Janice and I agreed that it is important that teachers accept the full responsibility that comes with the title. We discussed the possibility that *real* authority, may actually be authority which serves others. Janice told me that real authority was something that she had to work at. She said,

> I would want my authority to be built on the respect that kids have for me as a person, that they know that I'm trying to do my best and make this the fairest and safest place that it can be. And I'm hoping that they will do their best as well.

Janice believed that if her students respect and trust her, they will follow her lead. She believed that if she was to earn her students' respect and trust, she would have to trust

and respect them as well, she would have to remember to exert her authority with care. Janice commented,

> That's my ultimate goal--to have them not be embarrassed, to keep their dignity, to not belittle them in front of everybody. [If I have to exert my authority], I'd like to keep it as quiet as possible, just between me and them. Today, this little girl, Josie, stole a coin from a little boy who dropped it on the floor. She found it. She said that it was hers from home and I knew it wasn't. She stole a loony out of Daniel's desk yesterday and today she stole a pencil. So finally, today I said, "Josie, I know you're stealing from people." I took her out in the hall and we had a little talk. No one had to hear the talk; it was just between her and me. I try to be quiet; I don't need to yell in front of the whole class, "Josie, I know you're stealing things!"

Janice realized that she had the power to take away a child's dignity yet she firmly believed that do so would be a misuse of power. Not only would such an action damage her relationship with the child, it would diminish her real authority. Janice believed that her ability to teach well depended on retaining her student's respect and trust.

Authentic authority is not power *over* others, but power *with* and *for* others. Power for the sake of others is earned and increased, not by robbing others of their power, but, by using one's power in service of others.

I am reminded of a poem called A Story of Beginnings which refers to a power that is, "keener than the weapons edge". In the poem, Starhawk (1989) called

this power the power of life, which can be felt "at the bottom of breath" (p. 116). The poem supports the notion that real power connects and supports; it does not separate and destroy. It is not issued from above, rather, it is the humble, yet profound power of living each moment with care. As Jardine (1992) asserts,

> The *real* critique does not fall from above; it issues up out of the Earth we actually walk, the life we actually *find* ourselves living. This school, this classroom, this moment with this child--these are the resonant moments that are full of our indebtedness and worthy of our attention. (p. 34)

Authentic power does not exist outside of us, as a constant or a given, the way that a title does. Rather it, "must be grounded, that is, connected to the earth, to the actual material conditions of life" (Starhawk, 1989a, p 177).

Such is the power of living and teaching with care, of earning our authority through our actions.

Having Integrity: Being Real

> Young people want to know if, under the cool and calm of efficient teaching and excellent time-on-task ratios, life itself has a chance, or whether the surface is all there is. And the best way to find out may be to provoke the teacher into showing him/herself. (Smith, 1988, p. 175)

It has been my experience that children respond when a spark of life ignites in the classroom. This sometimes happens when children suddenly understand that their teacher is not a dry cardboard cut out, but a living breathing human being. Janice told me about such a moment, which happened while reading a story to her students. The story's sadness caught her by surprise:

> I thought, "Oh no, I'm not going to make it through this story" and I started to cry and I couldn't stop; I couldn't read.... But I thought, it's OK for them to see me cry. So I said, "When I read something sad I sometimes cry and that's what tells me it's a really good book. If it can make me believe it so much that I cry, then it's an excellent book. And it's not bad to cry."

"How did your students respond?" I asked. She said,

> That's one thing that will get their attention really fast. I have this group of boys that I teach in the morning; they're the most wild group. It's so hard to get them focused on something. Yet when my tears were welling up and my eyes were getting teary they were all so quiet.

Of course being open, in this sense, should not become a rule or a tool to use to grab our students' attention; it then becomes artificial, a way of manipulating others. I think children know the difference between real and artificial. And I agree with what Smith's comment implied--that if a teacher is too focused on the surface, then he or she will be provoked. But if students already know their teacher to be a real person, a person who they can connect with on a human level, then the need to provoke may not arise as often. Janice told me how it was important for her to be herself with that her students:

> I want to be myself with them and I would like them to be themselves with me and I would like what we do together to be honest. I don't want to say, "Let's study native culture because you'll find it really interesting", when I don't find it very interesting. If I'm not interested

> in something or if I've done it 10 times already in exactly the same way, how can I expect them to be interested? And if I feel mad I want them to know that I feel angry. And if I feel happy [pause] I don't know, I think it's honesty; there's some sort of integrity in that. I don't see myself as separate [a separate person as "teacher"], but I think a lot of people do. They come in and somehow when they step into school ... [they are] different. I used to see myself that way--where I had to put on this persona, like, a teacher is supposed to look a certain way, smile a certain way, and I'd think, "I can't wear these clothes because that's not how a teacher dresses". As I taught more, I realized I can be myself; I can dress whatever way I'm comfortable. And I can tell them about my life and then they'll see me as a real person.... I don't know, [pause] I expect it from them. And I think I owe it to them to be as honest with them as I can.

Part of being oneself, of having integrity, is treating others as authentic human beings as well. During one of our talks, Janice emphatically stressed, "Kids are people. Sometimes you have to step back and see them that way, and think, 'Wow you are a neat person' ".

Yet in the same breath Janice commented that this attitude is easily lost in schools. She had to make a concerted effort to resist language, policies and programs that dehumanized them. For instance, curriculum documents often refer to children with language that reduces them to the status of objects. Aoki (1993) commented on this when he said,

> students are only implied in words like "implementation," "instructions" and "assessment." These others become secondary to the curriculum-as-plan being designed. Further, these *others* become faceless *others* and thus are reducible to some kind of sameness (p.97).

Teachers are thus challenged with the task of interpreting these documents. It is up to teachers to remember that written policies are intended to serve our students, for instance, this one with the mop of curly brown hair and laughing eyes, and this one with the deep raspy voice, and this one who always enters the classroom with leaps and bounds.

"Programs" sometimes forget who they are intended for. Recall Janice's experience with "Super Kids". The program, which depended upon treating students as statistics, became more important than the actual students it was intended to serve. Even though Janice had no choice but to play by the rules, she did not allow this to diminish the bonds of trust and respect between herself and her students. She explained the situation to them; she told them that she had not followed the rules correctly. It was important to her that her students understood that she respected them enough to let them in on what was going on.

Janice wondered if the quality of integrity had something to do with creating an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning. She asked herself,

> Why do certain things go well? There's something there. I'm not sure what it is.... The students are involved, finding things relevant and meaningful and I am enjoying myself. We talk as people just like you and I did over a cup of coffee. They're not six and I'm not thirty.

When Janice made this comment I remembered some of the times when my students and myself had become so engaged in a topic that we forgot ourselves.

For instance, I can vividly recall the life, the involvement, that one of my grade one students brought to a particular writing assignment. This child, who was so afraid to make a mistake, who usually froze when faced with the task of writing, fluidly wrote an intricate, detailed letter to his mother. Writing something very important to his mother was more important than worrying about himself. In forgetting himself he was allowed to be himself.

I can also recall occasions when the whole class, myself included, would break into hysterical laughter, when something happened, to make us remember our humanness, to strip off the surface and allow us to show ourselves to each other.

Even though Janice sometimes felt weighed down and drained by dehumanizing policies she knew that in her day to day, moment to moment encounters with her students she could choose to treat them as real people. The quality of integrity, which Janice described, made life in her classroom not only more enjoyable and meaningful for her students but for herself as well. When students and teachers relate to each other with integrity the classroom comes alive, and, as Smith said, "life itself has a chance."

The word integrity is derived from the Latin term *integer*, which means intact, entire, whole. Yet this notion of wholeness needs to be understood in terms of temporality. In a temporal, finite world change and motion can not be escaped. Thus, being whole must be understood as something other than being complete in the sense

of being finished. Because we can never achieve complete perfection, to understand wholeness to mean perfectness does not have integrity.

I would like to understand integrity as a way of being real, of allowing life to show itself. In this sense, we can be whole, if whole refers to being fully who we are at this moment in time. Thus, being real (and imperfect) can be a way of being intact or whole. We can have integrity by recognizing our limitations, the limitations of others, and the limitations of our circumstances, by understanding that this state of flux (the ups and downs of life) can not be escaped.

Caring for Oneself

Understanding that we cannot escape the ups and downs of life, that it is human to have limitations, is a sense of integrity which may translate into compassion for ourselves and others. Such an understanding may impart a sense of peace and freedom which could make it easier to continue our difficult work.

In teaching, there is a fine line between caring too much and not enough. I have known many committed and caring teachers who have been "burned" once too often, and have, out of survival, closed themselves off from caring. I have also known teachers who have had to become very ill before they were able to stop giving of themselves. I have heard it said that if my compassion does not include myself, then it is incomplete. Perhaps this is advise that we all need to remember.

I have spent a great deal of time addressing positive notions of caring. Yet, this talk may seem false without also speaking about the down side of caring. Caring,

committed teachers, like Janice and Dianne are at risk. They are at risk for having the very spark of life, which makes it possible for them to care, burned out. Their efforts to care were efforts to bring life into their work with children, despite the numbing effect of certain institutional practices. Yet for this effort to continue, they have had to remember to care for themselves.

If care is to be sustaining it must be balanced. Too much care can have the opposite effect of what care intends. Teachers may,

> "burn themselves out" by giving too much, too quickly, taking on the task of "re-inventing the wheel" at every turn, feeling responsible for, and vulnerable to, every happenstance. [Teachers can be] too sensitive, too open: in the desire to love all the children and provide perfect, stimulating, life-changing lessons, coupled with perfect classroom management etc., the initiate can easily twirl out of control, endangering not only the community but themselves. (Jardine, 1993, p. 10)

Much of my previous discussions of caring dealt with the importance of openness. Certainly, caring involves being open. But in being open, one is also placing oneself at risk. As Jardine above implies, it is *not* caring to be open all the time, in fact, it can actually be quite damaging.

Dianne made an interesting connection between caring and being vulnerable during one of our discussions. She said,

> [Caring is] a question of vulnerability, of allowing yourself to be vulnerable. I'm not sure what the definition of vulnerability is, but it must include something about being open, of having open eyes, open ears. Like, when you walk by a street person and don't see them because

> your eyes are not open. And when your eyes are open
> you become vulnerable to them; you care about them.

Dianne's instincts were insightful. The term, vulnerable, is derived from the Latin word, *vulnerare*, which means *wound.* Thus, to be vulnerable means to be open to attack or wounding. Caring, which involves being open, also involves being vulnerable and at risk.

How then, does one protect oneself without becoming completely closed off? I think this is done by including oneself in one's compassion, admitting one's limitations, giving up the facade of perfection. As Dianne told me, sometimes this means saying no. She continued, "I don't know if that's protecting yourself but you have to know how to say no.... Some people think that if you care, you're a doormat and you just say yes all the time. You have to be able to say no and still care."

Having compassion for oneself has a certain integrity; it involves being real, being honest, and letting go of the need to appear perfect. This sense of compassion is *not* self indulgent behaviour. It is, rather, "the opposite of self pity and self-indulgence because it arises from a distancing from oneself rather than from a wallowing in subjective emotions" (Friedman, 1983, p.40). It involves recognizing that one's own limitations and the limitations of circumstances can not be avoided.

Such a recognition can be freeing. When we let go of the need for perfection and control, and we distance ourselves from our personal troubles, we can be freed to place our attention on the task at hand. Friedman (1983) said, "Our wholeness is most

there when we have forgotten ourselves in responding fully to what is not ourselves" (p. 15).

This notion of forgetting oneself is not new. It is an aspect of the Buddhist notion, "upekka". Macy (1991) describes it as, "equanimity in the face of praise or blame" (p. 140). Her following suggestion could be taken as good advise for caring teachers. She stresses the importance of not being,

> dependent on even these rewards [the joy of seeing the effects of one's work] for ... work may fail and is bound, in any case, to displease some parties and arouse opposition. (p. 140)

Macy stresses the freeing effect of not being overly attached to the outcome of one's work, and expecting nothing in return. Such an attitude may be helpful in preventing burn out.

Equanimity means being at peace with oneself, even under difficult conditions. Webster's defines equanimity as: (1) evenness of mind especially under stress; and (2) right disposition: BALANCE. The equanimity which Macy described, arises out of a sense of detachment from the ego concerns of praise and blame. Thus, equanimity becomes a mode of compassion for oneself and it frees one to care for others.

A Final Note...

I would like to stress that authenticity, as I have interpreted it, is a possibility that arises rather than something we can possess as a permanent trait. By emphasizing the spatial aspect of our being, Heidegger showed that authenticity could be understood to be a *place* to be rather than a quality that individuals' possess. It, like

caring, is not a thing that some teachers have and some do not. Certain moments arrive with the possibility of authenticity and how we respond in these moments is particularly important. Thus, the existence of authenticity is continually worked out in the particular moments of our lives.

And authenticity is not an individualistic notion. The effect of one person's authenticity reaches outward to others. As Heidegger (1962) said,

> Resoluteness [as authenticity] brings the Self right into its current concernful Being-alongside what is ready-to-hand, and pushes it into [a] solicitous [caring mode of] Being with Others. (p. 344)

Again, I am reminded that my own authenticity makes it possible for me to be with others in a way that supports their being, a way that is authentically caring.

Caring has something to do with authenticity because who we are makes a difference. And yes, what we do makes a difference as well. Yet, as teachers striving to do our best, we need to remember that doing our best right now is all we will ever be able to do. And we are human. We need to balance our drive and commitment with the recognition that our caring has to be cared for. It has to be sustained. We must do so for ourselves, our students, and the world we affect. We must remember that,

> Personal power increases when we take on responsibility, and develops through our personal integrity, living our beliefs, acting on our ideas, striving for balance. (Starhawk, 1989a, p. 177)

CHAPTER SEVEN

WE SIMPLY PROCEED

Writing about care has had a tremendous impact on my own life. There is a real sense of strength that comes from owning up to this task of crafting one's life. What has been strengthened for me is a sense that despite the seemingly dismal state of the world, there is great power in responding to that world with heart. By this I mean attempting to live with depth and meaning in the particular moments that come to greet me. This may have something to do with what Hillman (1992) called, having an "aesthetic response" to the world, having, "a nose for the displayed intelligibility of things, their sound, smell shape, speaking to and through our heart's reactions, responding to the looks and language, tones and gestures of the things we move among" (p. 114).

One of my greatest influences, in writing about care has been hermeneutics. Built into hermeneutics there is a certain challenge; hermeneutics requires experience, insight, creativity, openness, compassion and a sense of humour. It is the challenge to live interpretively, to live as if the world is not a closed book. Hermeneutics has, in a sense, made it possible for me to write about care; it has provided language to articulate aspects of teaching which have, for the most part, been dropped out of educational discourse. For instance, talk of teaching is often reduced to epistemological terms, terms of knowledge. Yes, epistemology is one area that teachers deal with. But whether they are noticed or not, issues of ethics, issues of relationship, issues of care, and so on, are also dealt with every day. Every time a teacher makes a

decision in the classroom, somewhere, there lies the question: What is the best way to proceed? Epistemology alone does not provide the answer.

Hermeneutics lets all of the different aspects of teaching be what they are; it is an attempt to make sense out of the relationships between these things, to try to understand where they fit. And hermeneutics itself is deeply pedagogical; through interpreting and understanding situations in our lives possibilities are uncovered. And we have the possibility to deepen our understanding of the world, and thus the possibility to live with more compassion and care.

I have also been very intrigued by the term *compassion* and its relationship to caring. Compassion highlights an aspect of care that is sometimes missed in our usual use of the term. It extends the boundaries of self to include the world, it broadens one's context of care. Compassion does not separate care in particular moments with care for the greater world. There is a great deal of strength and power in noticing and acting from this sense of connection. When it is recognized we must do our best to act well right now because every thing in every moment matters and affects everything else. As Macy (1991) said, Self and World, "co-arise".

We have the opportunity to act with a sense of imagination, understanding, and wisdom when we consider the interrelationship between world and self. Which is why compassion is a notion that cannot be conceived without considering conscious action; it automatically translates into a way of being. In this sense, care may be understood as a primordial ontological capacity, providing the possibility to translate concern,

vision, and understanding into devoted action in particular moments. Consider the implications of these powerful words:

> every act we make, every word we speak, every thought we think is not only affected by the other elements in the vast web of being in which all things take part, but also has results so far reaching that we cannot see or imagine them. We simply proceed with the act for its own worth, our sense of responsibility arising from our co-participation in all existence. (Macy, 1988, p. 172)

We simply proceed. By infusing into our work, imagination, understanding and compassion, we not only care for our students and ourselves, we care for this world that we share with others. In this sense, care is more than something that is passed from one person to the next, it may be a way of facing a world which also needs us to care for it. Not only do we affect this world; it affects us. It has a life of its own. Part of the work of care may be noticing the forces which are at work in the world, understanding them so that we may be ready to face them well.

Teachers are *in* care. Yet, we live in a world where this is often forgotten. Care is constantly being worked out in classrooms. Acting ethically, acting well is always a possibility. Even though it may not always be openly acknowledged, we know this at least on an experiential level. As teachers, we know that there is a great deal more to what we do than what cold, surface, instrumental prescriptions for teaching suggest. For instance, test results are not more real than hours upon hours of imaginative discussion, of struggle, of wondering about, of trying and of failing, of getting up and trying again. And a well behaved, controlled child is not a goal worth striving for at the expense of all else. The lure of manageability, controllability, has led to quick

fixes. Care is not a quick fix; it involves understanding that the child being managed does not go away. As Dianne said about the use of medication on Brian, "It's a tranquillizer and it makes kids easier to handle". Brian's difficulties did not go away, except Brian's teacher was faced with an easier to handle version of the same Brian: this Brian with a particular teacher, a particular classroom, a particular home, particular parents, who lives in a particular world, all which have an affect of who he is. Perhaps remembering care has something to do with remembering and noticing the way this world we live in works itself out through us and through our students, an ability to see how a particular circumstance fits, what it suggests, "not being limited by what is nearby but being able to see beyond it" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 302).

There is the sense that care makes room; it is spacious. There is a sense of hearkening, an ontological vision, of futurity that care may encompass in the presence of another human being. It allows others to move into their own potential. Facing our students with heart, being ourselves with them, allows them to be themselves with us, and they strive to reach for the vision that we hold for them.

Somehow this sounds too wonderful, too perfect. We know that in the "real" world we do not always support each of our students in this way. Sometimes we try and we fail. Let us admit it; sometimes we don't even try. But let us not forget that such care exists as a possibility. Let us not forget that the person we are when we walk into the classroom makes decisions based on who we are. And who we are today is affected by decisions we made yesterday. We walk into the classroom, a result of the past. As Gadamer (1989) said, "we are always already affected by history. It

determines in advance ... what seems to us worth inquiring about" (p. 300). Yet there is always the possibility to be more awake, more responsive, to take hold of our present circumstances, to recognize what they are calling us to do. We have the potential to become more open to our experiences, to become "well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 355).

We can remember that we are in care, and within care exists the possibility to, "move with heart toward the world" (Hillman, 1995, p. 188). It may be the work of "the imagining, sensing heart ... to study the world with an eye to notice ... to train the eye and ear, nose and hand to sense truly, to make right moves, right reflexive acts, to craft well" (p. 113).

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