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# The Descartes Lecture

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## A Brief Foreword After the Fact

We ought to be like elephants in the noontime sun in summer, when they are tormented by heat and thirst and catch sight of a cool lake. They throw themselves into the water with the greatest pleasure and without a moment's hesitation. In just the same way, for the sake of ourselves and others, we should give ourselves joyfully to the practice.

Kunzang Pelden (b.1862, Tibet)  
*The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech*  
(2007, p. 255)

I felt compelled to introduce this lecture transcription with this passage because, well, it's hilarious and true, and might serve to offset some of the necessary dourness in what follows. It really does capture something of the sheer buoyancy and joy of interpretive work, despite all its setbacks and suffering and difficulty, despite the dark shadows that sometimes surround it, and how it, necessarily and unavoidably, summons the Lord of Death. Because these elephants, just like us, are living beasts, so, just like us, neither the torment nor the great pleasure will last forever. Even so, I understand that great snorfling, that parched grey meat, hot sun and cracking skin, that trumpeting pleasure, and the coolness of that plunge.

It certainly is strange, however, to read a written transcript of an extemporaneous talk whose breath has passed into thin air.

I must say that, reading this, I feel a bit like a grandparent who got to drop in and get the grandkids all excited, but then gets to leave when the hard work sets in. The students in this class might have found parts of this talk arousing, amusing or inciting, but, as H.G. Gadamer (1989, p. 299) said, so simply and so clearly, understanding is only just barely *beginning* when something addresses us and catches our attention. Then, the difficult work of composing yourself and composing your thoughts, of writing, of speaking, of shaping and forming, of finding out what the ancients have taught us about the locales of our living, and making a case for the truths and falsehoods of those teachings, of now, here, in these difficult times, telling the truth about what you've witnessed--all these set in hard and fast and linger far after the thrill is gone. That elephant abandon is very attractive at first blush, but it is one great image of the dangers of the pretty, deceptive face of interpretive work. This work makes you susceptible to becoming "like the leading edge of water running downhill--you go anywhere you are led, taking anything said to be true, want-

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ing to cry when you see others crying, wanting to laugh when you see others laugh" (Tsong-kha-pa [1357-1419], 2004, p. 222). No matter how long I do this work, I still can fall prey so easily to such furtiveness and distraction, a sort of floating, brainstem-storming connectionism that, in the end is simply self-indulgent, self-aggrandizing, and, frankly, cowardly. I know this too well: "using only joyous perseverance you will end up exhausted" (Tsong-kha-pa, 2002, p. 62) and exhausting the patience and good will of your friends and of your work itself. Practice is needed that seeks wisdom in the midst of this onrush.

After the gold rush - "something awakens our interest - that is really what comes first!" (Gadamer, 2001, p. 50)--hermeneutics faces us with the deep, scholarly question: what the hell is going on? It rears up as a path that must be followed, a lead that must be trailed, a task that must now be undertaken, of finding out, of investigating, of questioning and facing the afflictions that swirl around the topic, the topography I have chosen to travel--my own deeply personal afflictions in terrible concert with the afflictions of the world I am investigating. It comes on like a summons with my name on it, my life at stake.

"Do not place your hopes on sheer determination" (Tsong-kha-pa, 2002, p. 62). Only repeated practice will help, full of citatiousness, study, and a deepening knowledge of the ancestral lineages that we have often unwittingly inherited, that need to get committed to memory or written out and savored and read to friends and neighbors. Hermeneutics, thus, involves a dedication to the careful, suspicious reading and re-reading, interpreting and re-interpreting the texts and textures of our individual and common lives and worlds. And then, in the middle of all that, hermeneutics demands that I take on the task of composing myself while composing something about this world, while writing a "hermeneutic study." "I

compose this in order to condition my own mind" (Tsong-kha-pa, 2000, p. 111) and through such conditioning and composition, I always hope to provide some relief to the suffering and affliction that has spellbound me and my chosen profession. This is the unspoken vow. And this is a warning that knows no heed: once you catch sight of that water and its promise of relief, you might find that you can't turn back, that you can't undo the glimpse, that you've taken the vow without knowing it and that you're tethered to it even if you can't then fulfill what that vow demands. One common, lovely, terrifying complaint: There are signs everywhere. *Everywhere*. How do I get it to stop?

Remember, then, this is not just a matter of quelling the rampaging elephant with calmness and quiet: "no matter how long you cultivate serenity, you can only suppress manifest afflictions; you cannot eradicate their seeds. You need to cultivate insight" (Tsong-kha-pa, 2002, p. 22). Hermeneutics demands that we go *through* these afflictions (*Erfahrung*) and seek the aid of those who have gone before (*Vorfahrung*) and in this, seek insight, wisdom. Hermeneutic work is meant to induce and encourage others on this way. This is why it whiles and gathers and waits. This is why there is something pedagogical about it.

One more corkscrew, then. After all that, hermeneutics slams us with this: There are so many things that could be said, so many possibilities, so much that could be read and learned, so much of an overwhelming cascade--*everywhere*! What should I do? Well, welcome to Grad School, that most opulent life of leisure and opportunity (Latin *schola*, meaning "leisure," root of "scholar" and "school"). I'm reminded of how the great Tsong-kha-pa (2000, pp. 117-128) berates readers for wasting this rare gift lost in the flurry of more meager things. To paraphrase

George Harrison, that is not what we are here for.

Here, where, despite the often-gnawing circumstances that surround us, we face the question of what needs to be said here, now, right in the middle of these troubling causes and conditions:

We should have no illusion. Bureaucratized teaching and learning systems dominate the scene, but nevertheless it is everyone's task to find his free space. The task of our human life in general is to find free spaces and learn to move therein. In research this means finding the question, the genuine question. You all know that as a beginner one comes to find everything questionable, for that is the privilege of youth to seek everywhere the novel and new possibilities. One then learns slowly how a large amount must be excluded in order to finally arrive at the point where one finds the truly open questions and therefore the possibilities that exist. Perhaps the most noble side of the enduring independent position of the university—in political and social life—is that we with the youth and they with us learn to discover the possibilities and thereby possible ways of shaping our lives. There is this chain of generations which pass through an institution, like the university, in which teachers and students meet and lose one another. Students become teachers and from the activity of the teachers grows a new teaching, a living universe, which is certainly more than something known, more than something learnable, but a place where something happens to us. I think this small academic universe still remains one of the few precursors of the grand universe of humanity, of all human beings, who must learn to create with one another new solidarities. (Gadamer, 1986, p. 59)

But here is the good news, and a bit of a hermeneutic secret. All that hard, scholarly, detailed, difficult work, all that effort of practice, and reading and re-reading, of struggling to understand, to open up free spaces, real possibilities of shaping our lives, where understanding might grow and compassion might last, of underlining and hunting for sources, of page numbers and names and seeking out bibliographic trace-lines, and thus slowly composing oneself while composing an interpretive work-- all this ends up cultivating and deepening your ability to experience and share *precisely* that elephant abandon and joyousness. "[This world] compels over and over, and the better one knows it, the *more* compelling it is" (Gadamer, 2007, p. 115). Only now, we experience that joy and abandon as it really is, in the full knowledge of the flesh and its passing.

Hermeneutic work treats its topics like works of art that gather up our festive returns, topics that, in return for our attention and devotion, begin to glow in response to the attention we have bestowed upon them:

Hugh [of St. Victor (1096-1141)] begins to explain what wisdom does. The sentence begins, *sapientia illuminat hominem*, "wisdom illuminates man" . . . *ut seipsum agnoscat*, "so that he may recognize himself." Once again, in this rendering, translation and exegesis are in conflict, and the English words chosen could easily veil the sense that interpretation can reveal. Enlightenment in Hugh's world and what is understood as enlightenment now are two different things. The light, which in Hugh's metaphoric usage illuminates, is the counterfoil of the eighteenth-century light of reason [a child of the Cartesian lineage talked about below]. The light of which Hugh speaks here brings man to a glow. Approaching wisdom makes the reader radiant. The studious striving that

Hugh teaches is a commitment to engage in an activity by which the reader's own "self" will be kindled and brought to sparkle. (Illich, 1993, p. 17)

What *wonderful* images and ideas. What joy to know that it will take me years, maybe more years than I have, to be equal to a text like this. This is love and affection. That texts and topics and works become more radiant and compelling the more we experience them and take care of them, until finally they start to stand there without us, "works" in whose light we are then cast. What in the world would we do if *this* were true? How would our lives be lived if *this* were a possible way of shaping ourselves? Just imagine trying to seek out this sort of experience and trying to practice it. *That* is what hermeneutics requires of us. It requires reading as if our lives depended on it.

So right here, that frankly stupid divide between scholarship and practice, between academic work and "the field" finally starts to let go of its grip. "All texts are instructions for practice" (Tsong-kha-pa 2000, p. 52):

It is like showing a horse the racecourse before you race. Once you have shown it, you then race there. It would be ridiculous to show the horse one racecourse and then race on another. Similarly, why would you determine one thing by means of study and reflection, and then, when you go to practice, practice something else? (p. 52)

Here's one more secret about hermeneutics. It culminates, slowly, into the insight that this world will be fine without me, and the great sense of relief that can slowly come from this insight, the great sense of setting down the panicky task of mastering things and feeling somehow essential to their continuance. *That* is what it means to truly *under-*

*stand* something in the hermeneutic sense. This is part of the elephant's cool plunge. All this is cast in the shadow of my own impermanence and mortality and there is relief to be had in this insight, this admission.

"Take this feeling of letting go as your refuge" (Chah 1987). If we were not finite, none of this wonderful, ambivalent work of loving attention and composure would be necessary. If we were not finite, none of this would be *possible*:

That which is not split does not have to be rejoined, thus going by way of ambivalence circumvents *coniunctio* efforts of the ego ["a hitherto concealed experience that transcends thinking from the position of subjectivity" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 100), ...*hermeneutic experience*] because by bearing ambivalence, one is in the *coniunctio* itself ["*the true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between.*" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 295)]. This way works at wholeness not in halves but through wholeness from the start. The way is slower, action is hindered, and one fumbles foolishly in the half-light. This way finds echo in many familiar phrases from Lao Tzu, but especially: "Soften the light, become one with the dusty world." (Hillman 2005, p. 41)

So, "cultivate love for those who have gathered to listen" (Tsong-kha-pa, 2000, p. 64), but a great part of this love means taking some care, warning, chiding, admiring, not abandoning those who are just beginning, working through what are slowly becoming known to be intimate afflictions tied to deep sources, causes and conditions, and sometimes overwhelming consequences. Hermeneutics, like these Buddhist sources I've been citing, is adamant about the importance of finding a teacher (Tsong-kha-pa, 2000, p. 69-92) and about taking refuge in a community of others seeking to do this work (in Bud-

dhism, this is one of the "three jewels": community, *Sangha*), whether these be classmates, or, for me this summer, Tsong-kha-pa, my own light summer reading that I've re-read, now, seven times. Again, be careful. As a teacher in Tsong-kha-pa's lineage warns, watch out for that pretty face and that rushing cool lake allure: "the more intense the practice, the more intense the demons," this from Patrul Rinpoche (1808-1887) in his *The Words of my Perfect Teacher* (Patrul, 1998, p. 189).

All this, of course, is why what happened *next* in this Graduate Class in the Faculty of Nursing where this talk was held, is the real site of all the hard, meticulous and sometimes agonizing work involved in cultivating a genuine, sustainable and livable love for those who have gathered. This, in fact, is why this text ends so abruptly, because what happened next is itself a sort of un-shareable secret. It is the time of all those small back-and-forth words, small gestures, little referentialities, silences, little ventures and retreats, looks of panic, great laughter and relief, patience, anger, and on and on, where things start to happen and gather and work. Pedagogy. It is when tales of abuse, of addiction, of children dying, of overwhelming busyness, of black humor, of strokes, and family gatherings and hope and love and despair come forward into the open space, and the tough work, the real work, of building new solidarities begins.

Two quick words of thanks, then, to end this *Foreword*. First my sincere thanks to Shelagh McConnell for having the great patience to transcribe this talk with great skill. You saved me the unbearable task of hearing my own voice sound like a stranger's. And second, to Nancy Moules who has given me so many leisurely opportunities to practice these words that still seem to come out so half-clumsy, so, well, elephantine, too often with little cool water in sight. Our friendship

and our shared dedication are a great comfort and a great refuge.

### The Descartes Lecture

I've been working here in the Faculty of Education since 1986. The types of work that have evolved in those intervening years have been really an interesting thing to witness. I expect that all of you in different ways have seen something of this in your own professions and own ways through the world, how some sort of shift seems to be in the air or wants to be in the air-- about what knowledge is, how knowledge works, who is in charge of it, what it means to demonstrate what you know, what counts, what is needed in these strange and rushing times, and so on. This has been set up in the past, as you all know, as paradigm wars or the old, exhausted quantitative/qualitative arguments and debates. The good news is: that fight is over. Because part of that fight was premised on an attempt for the interpretive disciplines to demonstrate a certain legitimacy to, you know, figure out how to get "dad" to love and respect me. There was some headway made in certain quarters, and in other quarters, he just got more and more pissed off.

So you know, the really interesting news after all these years for me is that interpretive work needs to be *good*, but it doesn't need to demonstrate to those who don't want to do this type of work that it should exist. If you do a statistically based study, you don't have to prove to me that statistics is a worthwhile discipline. You don't. It's taken for granted that, well, too bad, there it is. Same with interpretive work. You don't have to justify its very existence, even though, with some granting agencies, some tenure and promotion review boards, and some supervisory committees, this demand still arises.

You know: "Tell me about this 'hermeneutics.' I've never heard of it." Oh well, okay, I guess that will be my problem....again. It's only been around for 115 years in its contemporary version. But you know, patience is apparently a virtue, even though having always to be the patient one is a pain in the ass, but you know, anyway, this is the situation we are in, always feeling like the upstart. This isn't just an accident of circumstance, because, of course, Hermes was a trickster, an annoyance who would never lie but never tell the whole truth either, a bit of a flit, a bit of a flirt.

This is but one more sign of the continuing dominance of natural-scientific work, that it can *always* demand that other forms of work "show their papers" like at a border crossing, but it never has to show its own papers. Hermes was the god of borders, but his role, much to the annoyance of the border patrols, was to keep the gates *open*.

The type of work you're dealing with in this interpretive research course didn't just arrive in the world. It has an immediate legacy that goes back to 1900 and just before, maybe 1870: Dilthey, Schleiermacher, and so on. And it has a mediated history that goes back perennially from there to all those moments of facing the world and our peculiar lot in it, of needing to read the sacred text for some signs of how to understand our contemporary woes. Midrash.

Part of what we all face, in this Faculty and in mine, is that we live in a world in which some forms of discourse have become dominant. And we all know that natural science discourse has become powerful and predominant. And for good reason--it's so confident, so sure of itself, it has led to such spectacular things. Look, see...computer. It's actually taping my voice and will download onto a thing that you can carry in your pocket. It has found *cures*. And so pervades the pre-

dominance of natural science discourse, its forms of knowing, methodologies, its presumptions, its hopes, its desires, and so on.

This isn't and shouldn't be a surprise to any of us. And it's not an issue. Natural scientific research methodologies and discourses are not an issue. This isn't an argument about quantitative work versus qualitative work. But there is an argument that needs to be understood and articulated. It's an argument about *dominance* and what falls into shadow under such dominance, what has been lost, forgotten. Because, as ecology has taught us in this past several decades and as many of us knew far before then, having a dominant or invasive, or pernicious, or exotic species in a certain place can sometimes take over and choke out the possibility of anything else. And, therefore, in the long run, in a lot of those cases, it can come to choke out the conditions of its own survival *through its very act of domination*. Monocultures are unsustainable. Being concerned about the dominance of natural-scientific discourse is therefore an act of love, an act directed at sustaining its well-being. It has lost any sense of proportion, any sense of having a place in our lives. It has taken over and become, well, monstrous.

This is a very, very interesting phenomenon. Ivan Illich called it counter-productivity: up to a certain point such "advancements" and "progress" and "expansion" and "standardization" and "centralization" are sensible. But after a certain point, the way he put it was, the various ways of working in the world begin to create the very thing that they were designed to solve or to resolve. They begin to create the very thing they are trying to fix. That's why school is producing ignorance, hospitals are producing super-bugs, and Deerfoot Trail is producing traffic congestion. It was great for a while, right? However, these things reach a certain level where, because of their predominance, they start to unwittingly work against

the very conditions under which they were working in the first place. So what I want to talk to you about today is not natural science methodology, quantitative methodology, but its dominance and how that dominance has affected us and affects what you want to do in this class, what it means then to try to articulate something other than that dominant paradigm.

One of the things about a dominant discourse that is important to remember is that those caught up in that dominant discourse don't have to understand *any of this*. But there is something more troubling at work here. Not only does a dominant discourse get to speak, and to get funded, to act and to be in positions of power and judgment which marginalize other forms of work, other ways of speaking and thinking and researching. A dominant discourse displays the depth of its dominance in its ability to define and shape the nature and limits of any *resistance to that dominance*. Its dominance is had in its unquestioned ability to characterize and speak on behalf of that which it is not. Just like the British got to speak about Africans, or teacher gets to name children and their special needs and no one gets to speak back (speaking back simply indicates that that child has "oppositional defiance disorder"). It is a very interesting relationship which hints at how all this is not simply an issue of "research methodologies" at all, but something older, more dangerous, and pervasive.

I want to elaborate this phenomenon of dominance one step further at the front end here because this will, you'll find, be where the really difficult work in this class will have to be done if you are going to understand interpretive work. Because of the dominance of natural-scientific discourse, that discourse provides a lingering image of what it would mean to do any other sort of work. All too often over these past 25 years I've see profes-

sors and students working with an ill-informed image of interpretive work that is simply a projection of what the dominant voice of natural-scientific work allows alternatives to be. It's about telling your story. It's about people's experiences. We all have our own point of view. It's subjective, its personal, touchy-feely, wholeness, mush, and it's easy because you just say what you think, right?

*All of that* and much more, is the dominant discourse's story about what you could possibly do if you don't do natural scientific research. If we are objective, you guys must be subjective. If we are hard, you are soft, if we have outcomes, you have poetic suggestions and temptations, and so on. But here is where it gets awful. *Those doing interpretive work start to fall for this*. Then what happens is that interpretive work starts weakly parroting concerns that are not indigenous to its difference: how many people should I interview? How do you look for themes? What about generalizability? How do you prove that this is not just "your interpretation"?...and so on. Because we've understood our own work weakly in the shadow of quantitative work, we fall prey to further weakening by the questions that then arise out of that weakness.

And so part of the alertness that I expect this course is about and that good interpretive work must take on as part of the work itself, is about working on our own ability to remember what has happened to us in our attempts to do something different than the dominant discourse allows. This is why you'll find that in interpretive work there is a vivid interest in history, not in order to "understand the past" but to decode our present circumstances and revive our current memory loss. Because the ditch that is really easy for this work to fall into is wide and powerful to the extent that we give way and if we don't remain alert, we can end up falling for precisely the meager and weakened caricature version of what we do in

interpretive work that has been "granted" to us by the presumptions of the sort of work we wish to step away from. This is just like nurses falling prey to the caricatures that doctors can have of them and their work, or teachers falling prey to the belittling of their practical knowledge in the face of Standardized Provincial Examinations and The Fraser Institute's calls for accountability. In other words, this class isn't just about research methodologies, but about a structure of our lives, our living, that we have inherited and need to start decoding. Just a warning, then, that this isn't a situation that you fix up at the front end of an interpretive study so that you can then proceed free and clear of it. You never get free and clear of the world. It is persistent--what is this about, where did this come from, how did we end up speaking like this in this world of ours, what do we do now? This ongoing decoding and the stumbles and recoveries it requires, is the work itself.

In my profession for example, the troubled child that can't pay attention is named that way by the very system for whom troubledness is already pathologized from the outset and so we don't actually need to listen to that child because we already know what they could possibly legitimately say--this "code" or that one. We once named them "wild and willful" so they could be punished and have their wills broken (see Alice Miller's work on "black pedagogy"). We now name them ADHD so they can be medicated. And that's what dominance does - I already know in advance what you can possibly say to me, so you really don't need to say anything because you'll either say what I already know or you'll be wrong. The only reason for you to speak is so that I can find the right slot, not so I can ever question that slotting itself. *That is a given*, the "outcome" of research. The only issue now is "which slot." I will admit that that slotting might be in error or that I've mischaracterized the slots and perhaps there

should be more or less or different ones, but the correcting of that error means that in the future, it will be *less likely* for correction to be needed--the goal being to put an end, via dominance, of that which resists that dominance, either through sacrifice (you will be eliminated if you resist--kicked out of school, put in a home, medicated into oblivion) or salvation--you will be saved if you don't resist. Resistance is futile because even resistance has been coded.

This reminds me of why libraries were burned down by Christian and Muslim groups back in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in Northern Africa and Southern Europe. They realized that all the books in there either say the same things as the Bible/Koran, and therefore the library's collection was not necessary, or those books say something different than the Bible/Koran and, therefore, that collections were heretical. Either way, just burn them down. Differently put, interpretive work is very interested in normativity, dominance, issues of identity (cultural, linguistic, personal, gendered, even the great divide of the ill and the well, the quick and the dead) and how these things gets sorted out, and by whom, and to what ends, and so on. The sheer naive innocence we have about words, ideas, images, has to be interrupted, as does the sheer confidence that this is just a technical problem, and that technology will save us, or science or medicine or education. People will die and stupidity will win out almost every time. These are our real circumstances. Everything is contaminated, embedded, interdependent, and nothing is what it seems on the calm surface. That is why interpretive work is interested in things like the leveling of thinking and idle chatter and how familiarity can breed contempt, and the like. That is why interpretive work has helped us understand that not only is natural-scientific work dominant on the scene of research. It is an act of domination--knowledge as dominion. And again, any form of thinking and study

that is not premised on dominion gets cast as fuzzy, soft, feminine, weak, emotional, subjective, and, in the end, self-indulgent. Just like hermeneutics!

Okay, so I want to talk today then a bit about our amnesia. One thing that happens in a lot of research methodologies is that we believe at the outset that they are simply something that someone can tell you how to "do": here's how you do it and then you do it. Right? And we find ourselves in a position at the university and in schools, and then lots of other quarters, that if a research methodology asks something more than that of me than that, then something weird is going on. And one of the things about interpretive work that is so painful is that at the outset it demands that we *stop* thinking about what to *do* and *start* to think about what's *already been done to us* and how it's ended up this way and why we talk about kids or patients or clients like this or that, and where those images and names and taken-for-granted practices came from and what they are dragging along with them. Like David Smith said, underneath the calm and cool and familiar and taken-for-granted surface of things, whether life itself has a chance, or whether the surface is all there is. But what very often happens in our culture is that we orient to simply what's next to accomplish and skip from surface to surface. Everything seems to be about just staying calm and afloat on the surface. Just letting it go by and saying, well, as a high school teacher said to me recently (and I've heard this dozens of times), "You don't understand, this is just the real world. This is just the way things are." Right? It's just the way things are. You're reading too much into it because there isn't anything really there. The surface is all there is. And all we can do is keep going because if you slow down, you're sunk.

Well, one of the fundamental beliefs in interpretive work is that this isn't simply "the

way things are." This is how things turned out, and there are reasons that things turned out this way and not some other way--there are voices there, stories, things that have been forgotten and silenced and marginalized, hopes that have atrophied or been suppressed. Not thinking about these matters, exploring them, "researching" them, doesn't mean that the world is not full of implications on our very lives and the lives of our students and patients and friends. And because of that, the very confidence with which we do what we do is surrounded by failure, by exclusion, by erasure, by lost dependents, by amnesia. And, therefore, to actually understand what we're doing is to try to wake up and understand the fixes we are in, where they came from, and what might now be possible, what freedom or refuge we might want or need in the middle of all this.

Wanting to try to wake up from this amnesiac state is a life-long task. And it's also the definition of the tragedy of human life because, you know, now, at this is the tail-end of my career, I'm now starting to figure out that schools are pretty much the same as they were when I started thinking and writing about these things. There is a strange message here, that this work of thinking about our lives--well, not everyone is interested, not everyone is up to that task, and this has always and everywhere been true. You are here in this opulent position of grad school, where you've decided, whether you know it or not, to stop slumbering. And even though part of what comes to consciousness is that this venture is joyfully hopeless, even though we know we won't somehow finally succeed, still, that is the direction that interpretive work deliberately and bloody-mindedly faces: trying, again and again, to remember these threads of inheritance that we're dragging with us, what they've done to us, and how our work gets shaped by those things whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not, whether we ex-

perience it or not, whether we care or not. That's why this work isn't about telling me about your experiences. Because our experiences are manipulated and designed and destined to forget very often. This is why this work isn't about securing some safe place from which to launch a methodology, because it is about being implicated without having meant or intended to be, without knowing it, without deserving it. This is why hermeneutics infuses in phenomenology's interest in "lived experience" the terrifying prospect of "false consciousness," where lived experience often hides darkness under its bright presence. So I want to start off by sketching out a very simple example that comes from a scenario in the classroom. Think of a situation of a teacher who's been in a school for quite a while and has taught in that school for several years and a new student comes into the classroom and the teacher automatically recognizes she taught the older sibling of this new student three years ago when the two children's parents were breaking up. Things didn't go well. So up wells the strife of that past event and becomes something of the surrounding of this new student, and even the efforts to hold this at bay have *their own* complex surroundings of past experiences-- Professional Development seminars bent on detailing how to deal with such uprisings in yourself as a teacher-- "Ten Tips for Tough Teaching," and so on. Even the old saw of "every child is an individual" is profoundly full of ancestral ideas, voices, controversies and the like, even though we might not experience these immediately, they are the undergrowth that is part of the fertility in the soil we inhabit.

So when the separate and single event of this one child arriving occurs, we all know that there is no such thing, actually. Echoes from the classroom across the hall where this child was taught last year; a blue file folder with too much and too little information, faint memories of staff room conversations long

forgotten. It may take a long time to work through, to work out or unravel, and so the memories of the teacher and the presumptions of the teacher and the past experiences of the teacher all get tangled and ignited under the auspices of what was supposed to be a single event. Now that other teacher who taught this new child last year across the hall was once a friend of the principal who has since transferred, and last year's vice-principal is now the principal. It was she, as vice-principal, who had to "deal with" this student last year, troublesome, with a file "this thick" and they had an IPP (individual program plan) for him as prescribed by Alberta Education, mandated under a program of studies written by "those guys" up in Edmonton (whom the now-transferred principal slavishly admired and the new principal wants to set to the side in favor of a more "inquiry based" approach to teaching and learning). And, of course, surrounding those guys in Edmonton, as well as this "new" thing, "inquiry," are tangled in arrays of influences, affiliations, research, histories old and new, sob-stories, exaggerations, frustrations, success stories, hopes and desires and fears, and the like. Causes and conditions all the way down.

Now yet another new student comes in the room with his parents, and we all know, intimately and with great familiarity, that this doesn't simply add "one more thing" into the mix but in fact cascades through that already tumultuous mix, making each of the already roiling arisings tangle and untangle and thread and unthread, all over again. It's just like a new child in my family wasn't just "one more," but actually rattled back through those relations that were already ongoing, and actually transformed me into a father and my father into a grandfather and made my father's fathering of me an issue that it hadn't quite been before. Nothing is every just "itself."

Now, there's no sense going on and on about an example like this because it's all too ordinary for words in some ways-- at each moment, we end up with these clusters of dependent co-arising that rise and fall, come forward and recede, undulating, remembered, forgotten, resolved. And we all know that you can become practiced in finding your way through these things artfully, professionally and well. It is like imagining running down a crowded sidewalk. You can't exactly give rules for how to do it, but it can be done, and even if you run into someone, we know, within negotiated parameters, how to correct this error and carry on--apologize, explain, and off we go. The principal relates to the Ministry, the Ministry's mandates guide the teaching of the child, the child relates to the new child, the new child is in the school of the principal, the parents, the leg bone's connected . . . thigh bone, hip replacement. It's so ordinary, that its fabric and its workings, fall from sight very easily.

It's just normal, right?

Now it's hard to believe, but this phenomenon was downright *revolutionary* when it entered explicitly into the history of research/philosophy around 1900. Edmund Husserl, in 1902, wrote the *Logical Investigations*--one of the founding documents of contemporary phenomenology, and he formulated the idea of--this is the technical term he uses: it is called *everyday life*. Or in German: the life-world, *Lebenswelt*. The Life World... like, well, this. Just everyday, ordinary, simple, negotiated, complex, multivocal, populated sites of action and agency, of words and images and ideas and projections and secrets, of past experiences and desires, of market manipulations and media events, kings and queens and great urban bustles, and hospitals and schools...great big institutions forged with forgotten memories and hopes and aspirations, with all the ordinary charts and graphs, politi-

cal suasions, issues of advocacy and accountability, cultures and multicultures, gender roles and disputes, heat and little light, economic pressures, lies and truths, facts and fictions, and on and on and on. All this mess.

So in walks this second child into the classroom [laughs]. This is what Husserl got a glimpse of, that even the small event of a child walking into a classroom happens right in the middle of this whole tumultuous world with all the implicate orders of causes and conditions, all the mixed cultural memories, all the old decisions about schools and grades and everything all jumbled and all attached. Ordinary. The life world. And you can add in here too all the arrays of labels that can be used to name this kid—I love the latest one, "oppositional defiant disorder," where you not agreeing with me labeling you has a label. Or "learning delayed" or "gifted." And then even the controversies that these labels are not meant to be casually used like this. . . but Husserl identified a thing he called "flowing in," where the specialized discourses produced of the natural sciences' sorting mechanisms start to become part of the ordinary coinage of everyday life. Like "normal." And with this also comes the swirl of things we've given up: "retarded," for example...we still carrying the entrails of what we've left behind, so we add "wellness" to "health" because it seems like a good idea, and we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that these terms, too, will wear out, and like beehive hairdos or disco-balls, we'll wonder what in God's name we were thinking sometime in the foreseeable future and that this will happen *no matter what we do*.

So you can see how even our language ("that kid must be gifted") --that terms like these in elementary school or high school just waft out into the world and become common coinage as if we don't need to think about anything. We come to believe that words are

innocent. It's just "oh he's gifted...oh, right." And everybody knows exactly what you mean until you start talking about it and then it gets complicated. That's why the familiarity of the life-world is such an interesting thing. When you ask people to actually give an account of what another person means when they say "gifted" you end up getting a glimpse of this thick, contentious, ambiguous, contradictory fabric of the life world--what Husserl called sedimented layers of sense pile one atop the other and completely obvious until some interruption occurs. The stories start rolling out about the troubles people have had with these labels, and these stories are always more variegated, ambiguous, multiple and heated than the labels themselves. And then, even when some interruption of this familiarity does occur, we tend, for the most part, to do our best to do repair work so we can get back to not thinking about it anymore, get back to finding it obvious. Just get better labels so we can get back to not having to think about these things.

Now, this is where I want to talk particularly about some threads of this complex, contradictory inheritance that we're all living in the middle of. How did it turn out that, in the midst of all this, natural-scientific discourse became dominant? And, therefore, what *is* interpretive work, anyway?

We need to go back to around 1640. Two things. First, remember that we're searching for something about the dominances and amnesia we've learned to live with and have inherited. Second, from what we've already seen, there really is no such beginning date, actually. Because to actually pinpoint where these ideas would have originated is both important to do and fruitless at the same time. It has this funny aspect to it, because every time you turn around, things unravel and get away again. The gate gets left open.

But the reason I am pointing out 1640 is because there was a very clear articulation of a very important shift, philosophically, in Europe and in this is buried something vitally important about our current lot.

Rene Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* and his *Discourse on Method* were both composed around this time. And he had a very interesting purpose for writing these treatises. We have to remember that trying to name this purpose and trying to explore its consequences is not an attempt to find out who the bad guy was, but to find out who our relatives are. Genealogy. Because Descartes' purpose was actually really interesting. He looked out into the world he inhabited and the shifts and changes that were at hand--the shifting power of the Church, the burgeoning arising of new sciences, world wide exploration and rising self-consciousness of modern Europe, and suggested that if we're going to understand what's happening to us and if we're going to provide some continuity and stability to these freshly emerging new ventures (in particular, what became known as modern science), we're going to have to find out how to stabilize our relationship to these matters, and find some sort of solid, reliable foundation, some platform, something on which our work can reliably rest.

Because, as goes the ancient adage, if you don't build on a foundation then everything you build will be as weak or as solid as the foundation you build it on. And so if we don't find a solid foundation for this new human venture, we're going to end up having it collapse on us in all sorts of random and different ways. We're not going to get anywhere because it's going to keep eroding itself and so on. So, right off the bat, Descartes is interested in the foundations that lie at the advent of modern science, what we've inherited as quantitative research - natural science research. His initiating gesture was to ask

"What is the foundation upon which we should build?" Sound familiar? Now the interesting thing to realize is that the initiating concern of Descartes was an ancient initiating concern. What's first? What's most reliable? What's most solid? What's most true? What's most unshakeable? So, in fact, we get in Descartes' work, an echo of ancient religious traditions trying to find out what the foundation of the world is. As we all know, the wise man doesn't build his house upon the sand. Do you remember that old hymn? I can just barely remember it. He builds it on the Rock.

In other words, foundations are important and they always have been, and even though Descartes' efforts were directed towards erasing any old reliances; those very efforts are themselves old and reliant. This is an old, old story, this story of starting anew, and this new story of starting anew casts a new light on something that is age old and makes us able to look at this old thing anew. Ta-da! Hermeneutics!

Okay, so, here at the origin of modern science you have the equivalent of a religious invocation. Where is my Rock? My wife just told me, by the way, Jesus decided to build his Church with Peter (*Petros*) as its foundation--which is the same root as "petrified" meaning "rock." I just found that out a couple of weeks ago. This is why interpretive work is often really, oh hell, I just thought it was the guy's name. But it's not. And what a coincidence that Jesus would have picked him, eh? On this rock I will build my church. In other words, right in the presence of all that seriousness that we've lived with ever since, including all the literal-mindedness of fundamentalism, was a beautiful, funny play on words. It's a good joke actually. I'll build the church on *Petros*. Of course! Like I said, that was two weeks ago. This is what you have to get used to when you do interpretive work. That the world has these infinite layers of

meaningfulness, that nothing is what it appears to be, and you'll have to get used to being humiliated over and over and over again. Humility, humor, humus, being human, earthiness, laughter. When the laughter arises, it's like a secret clue that something is going on beneath the surface calm. Like the little anecdotes told in the staff room, or the "there was this patient, once . . .". Yep! All that too! Clues.

The good news here is that everything, *everything*, is more interesting than it appears to be.

So now Descartes is in this conundrum. In education, we call this conundrum the debate over going "back to the basics." And there's something good about that call. There's something good about saying "What are we doing?" "Should we keep doing this?" "Or are we in trouble, on the wrong track?" This, again, is an old story in the life-world, repeated in many ways, and even schools are organized to "start all over again" every September, or every January 1st--clean slates, square one, washing away sins. Dead ordinary, this. Going back to basics. Great thesis topic. What's basic in pediatric oncology, that firm spot where all this rests? Not just drugs, not just treatments, not just families and the shadow of death over the young, not just that parents should die before their children, not just that everyone is going to live forever or die eventually. Where is Peter?

So remember, right there at the advent of modern science was something akin to a religious invocation. This is why fundamentalism and foundationalism are of so much interest in interpretive work and why interpretive work is not fundamentalist or foundationalist. It knows that any claim for something being first is familiar, familial, an old story ambiguously akin to other. One more "once upon a time" caught in the fabric of the life world.

So Descartes took upon himself this really interesting, brand new age-old task. He decided that he would examine everyday life and all the forms of knowledge and appearances of knowledge and the interdependencies of knowledge and claims to knowledge that he came upon, all the opinions and evidence and superstitions and worries and declarations. All of them. He did this in order to find out whether there was something in everyday life that could be relied on as an unshakeable foundation of how to proceed. He decided to do this in a way that seems abstract at first. He said "I'm going to look at all of these one-by-one"-- he called this process "methodical doubt." His premise here was simple but important to stress: if it's *possible* to doubt this or that form of knowledge, we'd better not use it. So, I'm walking over here and I'm assuming that the chair is where I see it to be, right? It would be goofy to be walking over here to doubt that, or to doubt that that water bottle I'm reaching for isn't there. But it's *possible* to doubt it. I could be hallucinating; I could be dreaming. Last night I dreamt about doing this class and I was as convinced then as I am now. So you look out into everyday life and you go...okay we'd better not place our confidence on everyday perception, because if you get drunk or you put one hand in cold water and one hand in warm water and then put them both in the...right? One hand will feel cold, right? So perception is...no, you have to be careful! It can mislead. It can't be trusted because it is *possible* to be misled. I might be dreaming all this. It's *possible*. So this is what he did.

Okay, then he said "Well, well, what about everything my parents told me?" "Anybody want to guess? I don't know about your parents...[Student: "They were wrong?" (laughter)]. It's even worse than that! *They may have been right* and I could have simply misunderstood them. I could be wrong about them being wrong! It could have been me!

You see, that doubt is possible. They could have been perfect in their knowledge, but I don't know for sure that I understood them properly. And they could have been imperfect in their knowledge, right? So he says, oh you can't do that.... this won't provide a solid foundation on which to build, what my parents taught me.

What about everything we read from the ancients? Aristotle, Plato, all those texts that we have inherited. Well, there could have been bad errors when the text was translated from Greek into Latin, and so on. They may have been deluded. I might be incapable of understanding, may have read it the wrong way. And even if I've read the commentaries, this or that commentator may have been nuts, or motivated by lust or desire or self-aggrandizement. So Descartes kept going through all of this. What about everything my teachers told me? What about everything that people say on the street? Go back to that example in the classroom. What the principal says? What the former principal says? What the parents contend? The child's experience? The education textbooks? The Ministry of Education? The latest research? Older research? The newspaper? The Fraser Institute? My own opinions? What? Who? The doctor, the patient, the drug salesman, the janitor? I can't even be trusted to read the word of God in a way that is beyond doubt...literacy, translations from Aramaic, the interventions of the Church in editing things, my own feeble memory!

All these familiar ways of the life world can't be relied on unshakably and as you can see...guess what? Descartes discovered that *the foundation of the world is not in the world*. Sound familiar? Every single religious tradition has said this...just remember, again, we're at the advent of modern science. Just don't forget that. That's why this is so interesting. I cannot find the foundation of the

world in the world because everything in the world can possibly be doubted. So I can't go to the world to find the foundation of the knowledge of the world I am trying to build. So this puts Descartes in a really interesting position because now he's sitting by his fire going, well--I remember doing this several times in the sixties--uh-oh, *now* what am I going to do? Because that very thing, the ordinariness of everyday life, that, when I was part of it, was so ordinarily reliable, ends up, because of its very ordinariness, to not be what I need. What do I do? Why am I doing this process? This is crazy. I'm going to go nuts. Uh-oh. Every tether to the world is not to be trusted. He became cut off from every worldly recourse, isolated, severed.

In retrospect, this sounds a little crazy, but it's also an amazingly courageous thought experiment. It's partially a recapitulation of what most teenagers go through or what everyone goes through when a kid dies, or a parent dies, or a job is lost, or when you leave home and find yourself adrift from all those old comforts. Very ordinary, but Descartes radicalized this process. Where you have this collapse of the familiar certainty that used to cocoon you and make you feel comfortable and it all of a sudden evaporates. It's Ecclesiastes. Descartes, like that old text, is doing this to himself *on purpose*. It's very, very interesting to have done—to try to be deliberate about this. It really is the sort of courageousness that any spiritual discipline requires. Shedding the vestments of the world, cutting away, burning away, washing anything that cannot withstand this methodical doubt. Purification rituals. Baptismal images. Umbilical severances of old reliances. Old stories, these. So he ends up going, "Okay, maybe I should push this further. Maybe all of that confidence I have about going through this process of doubt should also be cast into doubt. Maybe that's not reliable either. Maybe I'm just nuts. Maybe I'm just crazy." And so he ended up in

this spot that kept getting smaller and smaller. And he ended up saying, "Maybe I'm not doing this process at all. Maybe I'm not even doubting the world." And he got stuck, as we all know, in this really tight curve. "I doubt that I'm going through this process, but I am doubting that I'm going through this process. Okay, maybe I should doubt that, but if I do that..." So it ended up that I can't doubt that I'm doing this because if I'm doubting that I'm doing this, then I'm doing this, and I can't get out of that because if I try to get out of that, then I'm trying to get out of it. It sounds like a parlor trick: if I doubt that I'm doubting, then I'm doubting, so I can't doubt it.

This is where the old saw that everyone knows about Descartes then comes from: he said "I doubt" and doubting is a form of thinking, and therefore, I am thinking and even if I doubt, it is still true. Therefore, *I am* thinking. "I think, therefore, I am." *Cogito*--like cognition--and *ergo* [therefore] "I am," in Latin, *sum*.

This is kind of like the Mona Lisa of philosophy-- that painting that has become such a visual cliché that's really hard to actually *see* anymore. Everybody's heard this thing so often, *cogito ergo sum*, "I think, therefore, I am," that it's become almost laughable to hear, but in fact it was a really interestingly, weirdly accomplished outcome of trying to find an unshakeable, indubitable foundation. After doubting every single thing in the world, his own doubting of the world showed itself to be indubitable. Only once he had completely cut himself off from every escape route through the world did he find the foundation, deep inside himself, inside this abstract presence of himself to himself, "I am." Because even if I affirm that "I am not," I am affirming and therefore I am. So what we ended up inheriting from Descartes was this really interesting new thing that hadn't quite been imagined this way before: an experience of "myself" as a

"subject," an "I" that is present to itself with great clarity and distinctness, that is "world-less" and that assuredly *is* even if everything else is erased. This is new. And yet it is not new. This echoes, of course, the idea of a soul that is "in" the body but not "of" the body. Right at the moment of trying to found natural science, Descartes hit deep well water.

So, now, Descartes starts to look at the characteristics of this foundation that he has found through methodical doubt. It is clear and it is distinct. It is singular, it's self-identical, and is not confusable with anything else, not attached to anything else, separate, severed off from anything else, decontaminated (Mary Douglas said that the unclear is the unclean). Remember that all Descartes is affirming here is "I am." I may not know *who* I am beyond a shadow of a doubt. I may have a fairly good idea, but not beyond a shadow of a doubt. I may not know *what* I am. I am not even sure I know *where* I am, but I always and unshakably do know *that I am*. In other words, sheer self-identical existence with no properties. *I am*. Singular, univocal, clear, present, without contradiction or duplicity. Whatever I am, I am. So you get this really weird abstract version of identity that has no substance to it: *whatever* this identity might turn out to be (since we don't know what it is, let's simply call it "X"), I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that  $X=X$  and this is singular, self-identical, pure and clean and clarified. Sheer self-identicalness.

Okay, Old Testament, *Exodus* 3:13-3:14. Coming down from the Mount with the Commandments, Moses asked God who shall I say has sent me? "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Just a reminder this is the origin of modern science. Just thought I'd mention that again.

So what we get in Descartes' work is a re-affirmation of an old story at the same time as we get an affirmation of something "other-worldly," purged of everything old and worldly--sheer existence: I am. So now he's got himself inside of himself, completely detached from the world and its ways, having found the unshakeable foundation.

Now it's not like the world actually ceased to exist in this whole process of methodical doubt. It just slowly and methodically turned into something increasingly unreliable and shaky. So, now here, right here, is the big turn. These new sciences of his time are purporting to investigate the world and they need a foundation that is solid. But the world they are investigating isn't going to give it to them. Descartes realized that he can turn his attention back to the world, but now he has to be very careful not to lose what he has won. We don't want to turn our attention back to the world and get re-absorbed back into that fray of the world and its amnesia, into its forgetfulness, its contingencies, and ambiguities, into its presumptions and start acting on the basis of that because that's not true to the foundation that has been established. In other words, if I'm going to go out into the world, I have to go out into the world with an eye to the foundation that I have found in my process of methodical doubt, this  $X=X$  clarity. If I am going to find any "truth" in the world, I have to demand of the world the same thing I demanded of myself with methodical doubt. What the world really is in truth is not that messy fray of ambiguity and doubt and inter-relatedness. If I go out into the world and see something shakable or dubitable, *then it's not real*, it's "unfounded." If I go out into the world and see something ambiguous, it's not real. Because to be real is to sit on the foundation and to sit on the foundation is to sit on a self-identical clarity that's unambiguous and uncontaminated. Therefore, anything in the world that admits of ambiguity, multiplicity,

interrelatedness, interdependence, metaphor, analogy, all those forms of... well, shall we say, mess? No! Truth is not a mess but is rather clear and distinct. Therefore if there is any truth to be had about the world, the truth of the world is not a mess. Because the truth has to live up to something that is not a mess--the foundation.

Therefore, when I find my way back out into the world, I have this new demand now that I make upon everything I meet. I do to everything that I meet in the world *the same thing* that I did to myself. Anything that's doubtful is *eradicated*; anything that's ambiguous is *eradicated*; everything multiple or attached to something else is *eradicated*. Everything has to become, like I did, "itself" and not something else. *Whatever this thing is that I am investigating in the world, it is what it is and it is not something else.* As with my own purified self-identity, I demand such purification from the things I meet:  $X=X$ , whatever else may be. So just like a new (but not so new) image of the human subject appeared in the world, now something else new arrives: "objects." In other words, only things which can stand up against methodological doubt (the Latin is something like thrown against, *ob-* and *-iacere*) are real, because only they replicate the hard-won truth of the "I am"--singular, separate, clean, clear, distinct, without contaminating relations. So what now happens of course is that Descartes starts to say *whatever* there is in the world, *in truth* it is self-identical, self-contained, not attached to anything else. Descartes ends up quoting Aristotle. The term for this in Greek philosophy is "substance." "A substance is that which requires nothing except itself in order to exist." That's his paraphrase of Aristotle 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. metaphysics. A "substance" is that which requires nothing else except itself to be what it is in truth. Therefore, the initiating presumption of our ventures out into the world is that if we want to know about the

truth of that world, we have to cleave off everything we want to investigate from everything it is attached to, every relation it has made, in order to try to get some determination of what the truth of that thing is, and all the subsequent relations of that thing with other things themselves have to be clear and distinct. Because its truth is its substance, its self-identicalness, its " $X=X$ ."

Now, just on the side here, this is sounding a little abstract [laughs]. Just a little... This poor child [points to a student in the class] was having trouble learning to read and you [points to another student] were her teacher last year and I'm her teacher this year. And her parents have just come in and they want to know what's going on. I make a case for her trouble being one thing and you make a case citing some other things. The principal who is also in the room, because that's what they do, says, "Well look, you said one thing, you said another. Whatever her reading trouble is, it is what it is. Right?" Everybody knows that: it is what it is ( $X=X$ , even if we can't agree on *what* this "X" might be). So if it is what it is, and the two teachers contradict one another, the contradiction *can't be in the thing* because the thing is what it is. If the thing is what it is, then the contradiction...the *contra* is in the *diction*. Not in the thing. Either you're right or I'm right or both of us are wrong or we have specified things enough, but things are what they are. The actual trouble in learning to read can't be ambiguous--it is what it is. That's what this means. It's a weird kind of common sense confidence that when we run into ambiguity, something with multiple versions or debates, that it can't actually *be*. It must be a mistake of some sort. Or lack of diligence or all sorts of stuff. Sensible in its own way.

So here's what happens in education. In 1900, somebody publishes an essay called "The Child." A week later, somebody says,

you know, young kids are like that, but that's not a really good description of older kids. Contradiction. The contradiction can't be in the thing because things are what they are. *There must be two things*. So the next week two books get published: "The Young Child" and "The Older Child." You can see where we're headed, right? And then somebody says, well young *boys* are like that, but young girls aren't exactly like that. Contradiction. There can't be a contradiction in the thing. *There must be two things*. Next week, four books get published: "Young Girls," "Young Boys," "Older Girls," "Older Boys." Actually, you know, the description you have for young boys is appropriate for boys of a lower socio-economic status. But in rich families... So what starts to happen then is a process of investigation that purports something, finds a contradiction, bifurcates the thing, and causes two new studies or four or eight or twelve. In other words, now, if you look in quantitative journals in education, you'll get papers like "The sub-nominal coding level of story-schemata structure in young boys of Aboriginal descent in urban settings from 1915 to 1918: New wine in old bottles?" --I made that up, but you wouldn't quite know it! So what you get in an attempt to protect the purity of the origin from getting contaminated, you get (in your profession more than mine) these titles that become more and more exotic trying to describe something more and more simple, singular and ordinary. More and more particular and straight forward. More and more carefully divided off from anything else. The simple logic of substance,  $X=X$ , finds, in traveling the world, that it must constantly divide. So you get this really weird condition of constantly having to qualify your work in order to preserve the purity of the first principle. Because if you didn't have "aboriginal" in the title you'd be confusing one thing for another and things themselves, in principle, aren't confused so there must be two things. So what we get is this proliferation, which is in the

natural sciences, that the natural sciences are profoundly good at. Proliferation of specification all with an eye to preserving this first principle,  $X=X$ . This is why natural-scientific research must always be "up to date," because it is constantly shedding the encumbrances of ambiguity and hidden contradictions.

Oh I didn't mention this. See this baby here [ $X=X$ ]? This is called the Principle of Identity. It's the central principle of formal logic, Aristotelian logic. And until speculations about set-theory in the 1930s, it's *the first principle of mathematics*. The first principle of mathematics: if you come across an  $X$ ,  $X$  is always  $X$ . You might not know what  $X$  is, but  $X$  is  $X$  is  $X$ . In working through an algebraic equation,  $X$  stays steady inside that equation. When you go to another equation, this equation is not that equation, but inside this new equation,  $X$  is  $X$ --an unknown (not sure what  $X$  is) constant ( $X$  is  $X$ ). The principle of identity unfolds into the principle of non-contradiction (something cannot both be  $X$  and not be  $X$ ), which unfolds into the principle of excluded middle, from which unfolds the whole discipline of mathematics. Starting with the principle of identity, every step in a mathematical proof participates in the clarity and distinctness of that first principle. Each step is clear and distinct. Therefore--finally, we've ended up with the origins of quantitative research that dominate our professions--if I go out into the world armed with *mathematics*, I take with me that hard-won truth of the *cogito*. As long as I can proceed mathematically, every step participates in the clarity and distinction of the first step. You have to mathematize anything you meet in the world in order for the world to live up to the foundation you have won. Welcome to the origin of quantitative research. Based on the origin of "I am." If someone asks about the legitimacy of a quantitative study, all you need to say is "I AM has sent me." There's just one more hint regarding some of the heat that comes off

this silly quantitative/qualitative debate. Interpretive work seems chaotic, like all hell breaking loose, heathen, pagan--both these mean "of the fields," by the way, outside of the Capital (where the sovereign "I am" holds sway).

Okay, so, just a few more little steps. Well, sort of little steps. Because the logic we're talking about here, this logic of doubt, withdrawal, self-clarification, and the subsequent dispensation of that clarity as a demand made upon things--this is far more widespread than in the natural sciences. It's important then to realize that this movement of condensation, the collecting together of confidence then issuance of confidence with great confidence has analogies historically and philosophically that we need to face up to because the dominant discourse of the natural sciences has kin and brethren that it doesn't know it has and I just want to talk a little bit about what those are. We've got to explore something of the terrible heat we often feel when we try to interrupt this Cartesian logic.

Okay, remember that I'm doing this for the world's own good. If this self-identicalness is actually the world's foundation of truth, then demanding this of the world is an attempt to help the world live up to its own truth and to help it discard those elements that are not part of what it truly is. Or to put it differently, the world is full falseness and fallenness, amnesia and sin and carnality, lies, deception, ambiguity, messiness, contradiction. And in order to understand the truth of the world is to save it from itself by demanding that it shed that which is not essential to its substance. I come in the name of truth. So there is, in this movement, an often hidden sense of its beneficence behind all of it. Or to put it another way, I'm doing this for your own good. I'm trying to save you from your own encumbrance that you don't even know that you have. You all know the term

used when you have something in your quantitative research design that you forgot to control for and your results end up with this uncontrolled thing in them messing up your results? *Contamination*--your results can easily be contaminated. So, all of this is a type of purification ritual -- Descartes' methodical doubt was a purification ritual. Descartes sought the foundation of modern science in something akin to a purification ritual, as does every natural-scientific study that follows it. The life-world needs rescue from itself. More strongly put, these studies are *salvational* in their design and intent.

Okay, so, purification, salvation, decontamination, the getting-rid-of outliers, the pulling of things into line, eradicating that which will not submit. As if this is the way that the world actually exists...separate, self-identical substances, whose relationships to one another are all post-hoc. Remember that? Objects. Then we have to realize that in order to get the world to be like this, we may need to *render it* like this in order to save it from its untruth and render it into its truth. Steps. I know what's true. I know what the foundation is. I know what's most real. I know what it is to be a human being and venture properly in the world and be concerned after its truth. Therefore, when I venture out into the world and I run into people who do not understand this, it is my *moral obligation* to take with me something of this lesson I've learned--to India or to Africa or to North America. And, for their own good, I must let these people I meet know that if they mistakenly feel at home here in this mess, they are not actually, really "home." You're actually away from home, immersed in the blood body of the world, without the "I am" to guide you. Home is actually "over there," in England, under the Crown (like the crown of consciousness, Victoria as the "I am" of the Empire). So out here in the wilds, I'll put in a Home Office, and you'll have to get a pass that requires you to

home in on where home really is, that marks you as being protected under the Crown--like a pass-port to pass through the portal, showing your "identity," your "identification." Now I'm doing this for your own good. I'm helping you to become civilized. I'm helping you cleave to the truth of things. And so, one the analogies that we're dealing with here is *colonialism*. A couple of centuries earlier than Descartes, just prior to Isabella giving the contract to Columbus in 1492, the Jews and the Moors were expelled from the south of Spain because Isabella realized that until we become ourselves and no others (until  $A=A$ ), we won't be strong. Only when we become strong can we then head out and build an empire. And so we "self-clarify" by purging ourselves of everything we are not--we become a self-identical nation-state purged of all contamination. So we kick out all the Jews and the Moors or worse, sometimes we kept them here and kicked them out in a different way--the Inquisition was a purification ritual demanding singularity. We do this for their own good of course, too. By the way, two weeks after Columbus got his contract with Isabella to sail west, a guy named Nebrija, whose name is still on many libraries in Spain, a grammarian who went to Isabella and said, basically, that until you have a single language in your kingdom, you cannot have an empire. And, therefore, you need to standardize, clarify and decontaminate and universalize Castilian Spanish and make it mandatory for everyone in your purview to give up the vernacular in order to be considered part of the kingdom. So to speak. So language itself was standardized by becoming singular, unambiguous, not multiple anymore, and this was done as a way to launch the colonial confidence of Spain westward. Language becomes singular and self-identical.  $X=X$ . This is exactly the same as the move to strip First Nations kids of their language and their family names, again for their own good. It is exactly the same. And we'll have no Moors and

Jews in our midst, no "others." Purification, with, like Descartes methodical doubt, a move inwards towards the clean and clear and distinct self-identity requisite of this new phenomenon in the world: the nation-state. The very idea of a nation-state is premised on this state of singularization, and dumping our contingent relationships to the diversity and multiplicity in our midst, telling it to either smarten up or leave. This is Canada, Mr. Singh, you better either become one of "us" or go back where you came from. So, purification, standardization, expulsion, what else?

This founding of the nation-state in Spain doesn't just back away into itself. It backs away, "founds" or "grounds" itself, and then launches back out into the world. This is the same analogous movement as the origin and launching of modern science. Because modern science will go out and demand mathematics from the world in the same way that the Spanish would go out and say "Christian or not?" Enrique Dussel talks about the dual myths that arise here: the myth of sacrifice or the myth of salvation: I will save you (by making you into me) or I will kill you (but sacrificing you will be for your own good, so sacrificing you will save you, because if you're not me, you're already living in untruth anyway). George Bush: you are either with us, or you are with the terrorists.

Okay, so now, purification, colonialism, standardization. Through clarification, "we" control the right of passage to the truth--the "colon" through which you must pass in order to pass. So then, when the British Empire starts collapsing and retreating, what happens? All sorts of brown people pass with their passports through the portal and "come home." They show up at England's door saying "Hi Mom. We're home!"

Yes, that's a rite of passage, that things must "pass through" the narrows of mathe-

matics--colon. In fact, "Christophe Colon" is Columbus's real name, which is just unbelievable. But in order to be a citizen of the world, his name had to be Latinized. Because of the Roman Empire and the centrality of Latin, Latin made you a citizen, civilized--these colonizing demands are age-old. Carolus Linne became Linnaeus right, because you weren't a citizen of the world until your name, even your name, was rendered under a universal standard, Latinized. This is why learning Latin was linked to be a civilized and educated person--still at work in my own days at school, this still lingered. (The Grammar of our Civility (Percy, 2005)--very interesting book by the way). So this is a really old, interesting story. To find out that this guy Linnaeus wasn't really Linnaeus, it was Linne. And he had to give that up in order for him to properly *be* himself. Which, again, is why First Nations children in Canada had their names and language removed as an act of beneficently saving them from themselves. It is also why their land was privatized, because then, land gets linked to ownership, and ownership is linked to rights of governance or domination over that land, so property ownership became identified, in the US, for example, with the right to vote. Only as a property owner is the dominance of my "I am" able to manifest. Ok, so, yes, copyright laws.

Okay, let's just keep going a little bit further here. It's not that I and things in the world don't have relationships, but they're all post-hoc. They're all "after the fact" of things and selves existing separately, divided off. That is existing indivisibly. That is *individually*. As with Descartes, we now take these truths to be self-evident. Contemporary notions of *individualism*, this is where it starts. This is what the autonomy and self-determination and individuality that underwrites contemporary democracy, this is where it comes from. So, now, if you go back and see all these autonomous beings all of whose

relationships are post-hoc, and that is after the fact of their autonomy, everything is revocable and provisional, including your culture, right? So this is where we get modern versions of multiculturalism. Where your culture becomes a "choice" made by someone who is *really* and *truly* autonomous individual, not *really* a Moslem or a Jew. You're an individual and then, in "our" culture (which now isn't a culture among others, but simply an expression of the way things truly *are*), you get to choose the practices of your culture or not. But these choices are now post hoc, after the fact, simply personal and subjective, because only the relationships that themselves can be mathematized are "real" or "true" relationships. So then you not only get frequency and repeatability of relationships or they're not real, you also get the enumeration or mathematization, of all these relationships. These are all zero sum relations that can be quantified.

In other words, the community is full of autonomous "X=X"s and the real relationships between these autonomous individuals are only those that can be mathematized. So, first of all, everyone gets one vote and then we add them up. It's only fair. It has nothing to do with who you are, what you know, whether you have any sense at all regarding what a *good* choice might be. After all, who am I to say? I'm just one more voter, and whoever gets the most wins. Parallel to this, community becomes identified with *the market*, because now you get relationships of ownership (by an "I am") and then the only "real" relationships are those that can be measured, so community becomes commerce between autonomous "I am" owners-persons. That's why you guys are called clients and customers of the University and it's all about choice and individual freedom. This is where the discourse is coming from...so you also get the market, and you also get capitalism as a standardized system of exchange that slowly

starts to replace the messiness of barter and the commons. Check out the history of the enclosure movement in Europe, privatization, taxation, where commoners who worked the commons became tax paying employees, and the land became *owned*. Market economies and capitalism are premised on this new sense of individuality. Purification, colonialism, individuality, privatization, democracy, market economies, multiculturalism.

But then, because of all this--and we're still experiencing this day to day-- we get these strange senses of alienation from our community and from our work that now has become distant, disembodied, standardized rule-following, so you end up with Karl Marx critiquing the alienation of workers. And also, given that we're all, *in reality* and *in truth* standing separately from each other, we also now need a mathematized/medicalized understanding of our sinful and lusty relations to each other or our sense of depression and alienation. Freud: no more fucking in the bushes! Well, you're still fucking in the bushes, but now you're unhappy about it because you all know that it's contamination, but it is no longer a Church matter full of snakes-in-the-trees storytelling superstition reprimands, but is now medicalized syndromes that have mathematized our sin, coded it into identifiable DSM-IV slots. Wellness! A personal matter. Even better! Self-improvement is sold back to us as a cure for the ails that that selling has caused.

Colonialism, capitalism, democracy, individualism, psychologism, market economy... Oh and by the way, I live in Bragg Creek and for your own good we're going to cut those paths wider to prevent forest fires. To prevent forest fires means to prevent a waste of capital--new initiatives for clear cutting were fronted by forestry companies, so the material of the forest will still be logged safely, and so insurance companies are satisfied. So we have

the beginnings of an ecological disaster here as well, severed from the world and then unhesitatingly ravaging the earth for its own good into board feet of consumable lumber. Like quantitative research will invade the classroom and save the messy life worlds of children and teachers by building subdivisions. That wild itself has no truth in it. It becomes true only when it is civilized, when the rough beast of the bush becomes a trimmed British Garden. Only when the earth submits to God's command that we, in His name, have dominion over the earth--only then is it truly itself. So there it is again, ecologists sound Romantic, hysterical, "spiritual" (i.e., messed up), but not in any sense *true* (since the criteria of truth is that things exist independently of one another, and claiming dependent co-arising cannot be true, only a blurring of what has been made clear-cut). Just like these brown newcomers and their constant complaints about Canada. Shape up or ship out. Okay, ecological ravaging is colonial is Cartesian is the root of quantitative methodologies. The earth is private property because only when it is owned is it brought under the measure of an "I am" and only then is it in truth what it really is. Native people are *wrong* and need to be saved from their silly ideas. They need to learn reserve. I know, it's not funny.

Okay, three more.

If this is the way that people actually exist, then I'm just going to add a really interesting thing that happened in 1540 or about, and that is the printing press. Which meant a couple of things. The ability to disseminate the written word quickly and easily. Then you get the rise of *literacy* and an increasing suspicion of orality, storytelling, things passed from breath to breath, women talking in the woods, conspiracy. Those nurses telling tales during the break, those teachers in the staffroom full of messy little anecdotes--nothing true there, on-

ly mostly women talking and talking. So the move from orality to literacy and the increased suspicion of muttering. Literacy as a way to tame the wild, become civilized, civil. And also, right here, put up your hand if you're a Lutheran. Any Lutherans? Okay... Luther took it upon himself to translate the Bible into German, into the vernacular and away from the standardization of The Church because believers are individuals and must work out individually their relationship to God and its saving grace. No longer mediated through the mess of the world and Churchy control, no longer through the line of saints and commentators and mediators or priests as your stand-in. So, thank you printing press, we're going to give you each a German Bible if you're a German so that you can read it yourself. So you put a Bible in each of these houses. To put it differently, Protestantism doesn't make sense without these: individuality, autonomy, "I am," and so on. Protestantism needs Cartesianism's loosing of individuality in a new way. This is why Protestant Churches have empty crosses and not crucifixes. The body of Christ, the world-body, is now risen, absent. No more worldly images, no more statues and portraits, no more working our way through the bloody corpse of the life world. Or to put it differently, that old life-world mess of a diagram that we were looking at before was very Catholic. Old council of Nicaea arguments, back to 767 CE, about images and their dangerous allures--not just false, this, as we all sit groggy in front of the latest news. It's the trouble of Danish cartoonists as well. Remember this is the origin of modern science.

Okay, so Protestantism and Islamic iconophobias. The glance looking for truth must look "upwards" to the heavenliness of the "I am" and away from the mess of the flesh. And of course, if you're going to put a Bible in every house and have people read the Bible themselves, they had better be able to read

because it's really, really important and if you can't, you're really in bad trouble. Some origins of modern schooling began here and so now we're back to the kid who is having trouble reading.

Meanwhile, of course, we've also become a culture that is simply slathered with rapid, seductive images and we think, now, that we can just toy with these things, like naive innocents, that somehow our "individuality" and "choice" is going to protect us from being led astray. Hah! Hilarious. We get alienated, severed from our surroundings and our earth selves and then, full of guilt, get emotionally caught up in reality TV as a sort of porno-replacement for living a life. Just like with the shows of African kids with flies on their eyes and sad faces: arms-length guilt-manipulated poverty porn.

One more convoluted thread. Last one, I promise. Remember how nice it was when we started out and everything was fine? Looks funny now--we just talked with one another, got our cups of coffee, joked, and settled in, and what starts to happen is that this ordinariness starts to look peculiar. This dominant discourse of the natural sciences starting to cast a shadow over the everyday life from which it has withdrawn and which it then renders into the objective world by mathematization. Anything *not* mathematized starts to look different, look, well...wild and woolly and out of control, and chaotic--individual, personal, subjective, fanciful, random, idiosyncratic, and so on. So in schools if you talk about pursuing an adventurous inquiry with students, you're saying that the kids can now to whatever they want, right? Because that's what this means now, right? You do what you're told (quantitative research) *or* you do whatever you want (qualitative research).

These now seem like the only alternatives and this infests interpretive work itself: either

I just passively let my participants tell their story, or I tell mine. Us and them. If we let go of mathematization, all hell breaks loose. See what just happened? If the opposite of doing what you're told is to do whatever you want, you've *left in place* the idea of individuality, *left in place* that the only way out of individuality is mathematization, and then simply dropped the math. If you do this, any story that someone tells you is their own personal property and only they get to say what it means. So in attempting to get away from the dominant logic of the natural sciences, we leave it in place, accept all its premises, and then opt for the only opposite that that dominant logic leaves available. This is this weird double logic where the dominant discourse starts to say, "Nurses, all they do is hang around and tell each other stories...and they just clean up after people and take care of them. They don't *know* anything in that actual practice of nursing except what medical science has taught them. There is no *knowledge* in the life-world, just messy, uncivilized exchanges." Same goes for teachers: no sense talking to them about their classroom and what is going on *because* they are involved in it, caught up in its messy flesh, and therefore don't and can't know, *in truth*, what is occurring there. They are contaminated. So even if I collect these stories together in my interpretive research, I have to distill (purify) them into themes that are repeated, because repeatedness means (ac)countability, and frequency means some truth is there, something reliable. But the truth is not in the telling, but in the renderable essence that can be gleaned from it *providing* you speak with a statistically significant number of "participants." So students who want to do hermeneutics ask me, how many participants should I talk to?

So you get all of these stories told by the dominant discourse of the natural sciences, not just about itself, but what you possibly could be doing if you weren't doing that. This

is the trick you have to remember. Because when that happens, when we try to do interpretive work, we start to take on the language that the dominant discourse has left us with. If we're not objective, what are we? Subjective! And a lot of us go, "yep, you betcha, that's us." Because what interpretive work must be, we are told, it's subjective. And the dominant discourse, meanwhile is going, "Oh, this is fantastic. Perfect." Because, in doing this, you have, in your very attempt to get away from the dominant discourse, confirmed that dominance by accepting the description of your own work that is supposed to be the *alternative* to the dominant discourse. Remember, the dominant discourse of the natural sciences is not simply predominant. *It is about knowledge-as-domination.*

Or to put it differently, here's the difficult part of this course you're taking: interpretive work is *not* subjective, it's *not* about personal experiences, it's *not* about people telling their story and finding themes, that is all a crappy version of quantitative research that is found in almost every single book about how to do qualitative research. It is simply falling for the shadow-version of interpretive work that the natural sciences allow. Hook, line, and sinker. You can look in textbook after textbook after textbook. They are simply full of nothing more than weak quantitative work in the guise of fuzziness, softness, resonance, feeling, emotion, or other such stupid things. Women's work. Touchy-feely. Nurse-y stuff. Interpretive work is about how to approach the life-world and understand its life *without* threatening it, and domination and demand.

So, then, that last one I've promised too often, and then we can have a break.

This is the one I always don't want to talk about, but I am going to. On the one hand, *material*, the material world, the messy life world, blood and guts, trails of implication

and interrelation, innuendo, stories, fabrics, like text and textile, and we're caught up in this world, defined by it in ways that have already taken hold of us before we try to get ahold of them. Implicated--like Gadamer says, beyond our wanting and doing. Materiality. And then, on the other, we have the *pattern*--the self-identical, the autonomous, the rendered into  $A=A$ , the clear and distinct and morally correct. Mathematics is based on the recognition and clear and distinct repetition of pattern, right, replicability? Repeated standardizable pattern is the only path to reliability. Otherwise one's results are not reliable. Materiality is *unreliable*. And remember, in such mathematization, "I" become "one." "I" must become *anyone* in order for my research results to be true. Otherwise, I have contaminated those results. The methodology must be wielded anonymously. I must be completely and utterly *replaceable*. Only when I am replaceable are the results I have found detachable from my finding of them. Only then are then "objective."

But we have to remember what this logic has left us with, that material needs pattern in order to understand its own truth. Left to itself, the materiality of the world has no indigenous truth because it is simply caught up in its messy interdependences. It is blind, mute, unknowing, stupid, dull, full of torpid familiarities. Unless the pattern of material can be gleaned, then we don't know anything true about material. It's just subjective then, right? Or accidental, or anecdotal or whatever. So it's important, it's a moral necessity that pattern *demand* of material that the material live up to the demand that the pattern makes on it. And if it doesn't, then it is refusing to be in truth, refusing to recognize *its own* truth, refusing to give up that which is not true of it, its accidentalness, its contingency, its earth-boundedness. Therefore, it is the moral obligation of pattern, if it has to, to *impose* itself on the material of the world for the good of

the material of the world. Not because it wants to be dominating or anything, but because it doesn't understand this forceful imposition as an act of domination.

It's an act of *salvation*, of *liberation*.

The colonizers in North America were always smiling.

They always had good news, if you would only shut up and listen.

The forceful imposition of pattern on material. So let's erase the letters that hide the truth here: Pattern, *pater*, material, *mater*.

At the advent of modern science, we have the old and familiar adage, that if she would only have fucking listened to me, I wouldn't have had to hit her, but she just kept fucking talking and she wouldn't do what I asked her to do, she kept talking back and kept fucking with me. So I had to stop her. I didn't want to, but it was for her own good.

During his methodical meditations, outside of Descartes' window, women were being burned as witches ...

... maybe we should get some coffee.

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