Introduction

I am a teacher-researcher who is making three original claims to educational knowledge in this Ph.D. resubmission as I offer you an account of my own educational development:

1) The development of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships has educational use-value in judging the quality of my educational practice; (the term 'aesthetic morphology' I will explain on pages 40 - 42.)

2) The analysis of my own fiction is an ontological guide to my effectiveness in turning my educational values into action.

3) I am developing my own living educational theory (see below) (Whitehead, 1989b) through a synthesis of my ontological, aesthetic and ethical concerns.

Before I go on to outline for you the way in which this Introduction is structured I feel it is important that I make clear to you what I am understanding by the term 'living educational theory' mentioned in my third claim to knowledge above. I am adopting Whitehead's (1989b) idea that educational theory is being constituted by the descriptions and explanations of individual practitioners as they ask questions of the kind, 'How can I improve my practice?' In the term 'living educational theory' the <u>living</u> dimension emphasises the developmental nature both of coming to know and of the values underpinning actions in the attempt to improve practice. The form of words - living - educational - theory - gives me the ultimate freedom to create something educationally original, generative and inspirational in a form which does justice to the complexity and uniqueness of my own enquiry. I present this thesis as my own living educational theory in the sense

that it describes and explains my own educational development as I try to improve the quality of learning with my students and pupils. I will go into more detail about 'living educational theory' throughout the thesis and will end with one expression of it. You may have already encountered one expression of it in The General Prologue.

I am now going to outline for you the way in which I have structured this Introduction. This thesis contains three distinct themes whose interweaving is one of the educational purposes of my research. These themes are: the analysis of the significance of my educative relationships in my educational practice; the educational standards of judgement by which I wish this thesis and my practice to be judged; and the synthesis of the four dimensions of my educational practice. (See the section in this Introduction about the Epilogues on pages 45-46.) The themes are synthesised through my own educational development and articulated finally through my own living educational theory. This Introduction is structured in such a way as to reflect the dialectical nature of these areas of interest, however. It is later in the thesis that synthesis becomes more appropriate as I seek to explain my own educational development as an articulation of my own living educational theory.

Structure of this Introduction:

First I will take you through what I mean within my first claim to educational knowledge by the term 'aesthetic morphology'.

Second I will offer you an overview of the four Parts of the thesis with their Prologues and Epilogues, with both a description of their structure, and a description of the ways in which I would like you to view how I am using the term 'educational standards of judgement' throughout the thesis.

Third your attention is drawn to the significance I bring to the overarching importance of 'good quality' dialogue within this thesis, as this is an aspect which concerns me throughout the text.

Fourth I highlight three educational standards of judgement which I offer as perspectives which you might wish to include as judgements on the whole of the work you are reading. These are **a) 'self-evaluation'**, **b) 'the educational nature of this thesis'** and **c) 'rationality'**.

Fifth I go into detail about other educational standards of judgement under the heading of 'Representation and Meaning'. I see particular educational standards of judgement being in epistemological relationship to the ways in which I can represent them in this text. These educational standards of judgement are headed under: 5.1.1) experimental forms; 5.1.2. systematic enquiry made public; 5.1.3. locating my own experience; 5.2.1. the significance of the writing-up stage; 5.2.2. development of research foci; 5.2.3. dialectical forms; 5.3.1. use-value; 5.3.2. truth and concern for individuals; 5.3.3. ethics; 5.3.4. authenticity; and 5.3.4a) ontological authenticity. These are further to be understood from within the three claims to educational knowledge which I made on the first page of this Introduction, all of which are varying expressions of my own educational development.

Sixth I outline in what ways I consider that the aesthetic morphology is an expression of an immanent dialectic. By this I mean that the use-value I make of the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships can only be fully understood in its representation as emerging through my practice over time.

Seventh I state again the three original claims to educational knowledge which this thesis represents in order to show in what ways an aesthetic appreciation of these three claims is central to an understanding of their educational focus in this thesis and in the practice represented within it.

First, then, the 'aesthetic morphology'. What is it?

First: An Aesthetic Standard of Judgement: 'The Aesthetic Morphology'.

When I started out on my research I was concerned with developing an aesthetic standard of judgement by which I could test the validity of my educative relationships with Teacher Education students. I would like to introduce you to a central idea in my thesis - **an aesthetic morphology**. Although I realise the difficulty you might have in comprehending a definition without a practical example at this early stage, I hope one will nevertheless enable you to read with increasing understanding as you encounter descriptions and explanations of its practical application later in the text together with some theoretical contextualisation.

'Aesthetic':

The term **'aesthetic'** is problematic. Diffey (1986) writes:

'At different times 'aesthetic' has been variously identified with one

of three main ideas: the perceptual, the beautiful and the artistic.' (p 5)

Under the term 'aesthetic' I infer all three of Diffey's spheres: the perceptual, the beautiful and the artistic. I understand aesthetic experience as that which links all of the above. One of the aims of this thesis is to show the ways in which the linking between perception, beauty and a work of art constitute many of my educational aspirations. In this thesis I also perceive in terms of my educational practice, the aesthetic to be concerned with the links I can make between the good, the true and the beautiful. (See the Epilogue to Part One in particular for more details about these links.)

Diffey goes on to express that much writing on aesthetics does not clearly demarcate meanings of the term and concludes:

'We should regard the term [as one that] extends thought by pointing to the new and not as yet understood territory. The idea is that by means of inadequately understood expressions such as 'aesthetic experience' our language is leading us to new possibilities of experience of which philosophy is not yet fully cognisant.' (p.11)

This thesis claims to make original contributions to educational knowledge, but I accept that explorations of the aesthetic can help me in my educational life to gain access to new realms of experience and understanding with which to make sense of my educative relationships, processes and ways of knowing. These ideas are shown in their practical contexts throughout the thesis.

'Morphology':

By the term **'morphology'** I infer the particular forms and structures which my educative relationships take in practice; I am referring for example, to the development of my educative relationships with students and pupils as we communicate in one-to-one dialogues, group discussions, journals, and through the analysis of video and aural recordings. In addition the form of our discourse is also framed by seminars, lessons, homework, assignments, curriculum and institutions. The term 'morphology' also has linguistic connotations to do with the forms and structures of language used to express an idea.

An aesthetic morphology:

An aesthetic morphology, then, combines a way of looking at the dialectic between the form and content of a variety of educational processes and

situations, of relationships and ways of knowing - in ways which emphasise the beauty, the resultant perceptions and purposes of them all (purposes being allied to the art of the process). I outline a process in the thesis in which the content and development of the educative relationships I have with pupils and teachers are analysed and understood aesthetically. As my research has developed I have begun to recognise that this aesthetic standard itself, when applied to my educational life, contains aspects - ontology, ethics and knowledge - which, when I subject them to analysis and subsequent synthesis, can enhance my practice and the educational validity of my work. It has been my growing understanding of what constitutes an educational aesthetic standard that has revealed to me that I need to be accountable for the ways in which I can represent my research if I wish it to be judged as authentic. This thesis, in short, seeks to provide a description and explanation of my educational development and living educational theory as I conduct action research enquiries into my educative relationships with students and pupils with the help of a developing diagnostic and evaluative tool - **an aesthetic morphology**.

Second: An Overview of this Thesis

I would now like to take you through a description of the thesis in terms of its structure and the ways in which I am integrating a developmental approach to the educational standards of judgement by which I am inviting you to judge it.

a) Structure:

In this section of the Introduction I am also concerned to give you an overview of the thesis. In it I will detail the ways in which this thesis has been structured in order to enable you to see clearly the development of ideas from

beginning to end, and perceive them in their context. Showing you something of my work with a more recent Year Seven group in The General Prologue represents some of my core educational values more appropriately than would have been the case in earlier drafts of this opening to the thesis. Eisner (1993) writes about representation:

> *'[it]...is the process of transforming the contents of consciousness into a public form so that they can be stabilized, inspected, edited, and shared with others. Representation is what confers a publicly social dimension to cognition.'* (p.6)

He also goes on to write about the effects of representation on meanings and I will address these issues at length in the fifth section of this Introduction.

Part One entitled: 'In search of my own educational standards of judgement: creating my own living educational theory' was written in 1993. It is in two sections. Instead of the more traditional literature search, I try in the first section to show how I have come to locate my work within the individually-orientated action research paradigm. I do this by revealing a parallel between educational research literature and my own educational experiences from my PGCE year to the present. The second section deals with a case-study of my work with one of the PGCE students, Sarah (1992-1993). I reveal the educational significance of my work with her through flashbacks to Initial Teacher Education students Zac and Justine from the previous two years. First, I show how my facilitation of students conducting action enquiries has changed, and secondly I reveal my own educational development. I concentrate at length on an aesthetic standard of judgement through which I am working out the value of what I am doing. This section finishes with Sarah's final assignment and her own comments on it.

Part Two entitled: 'In Search of Synthesis' was written shortly after Part One in 1993. It consists of two letters, one written to me unsolicited by CC (a Masters degree student from 1992 -1993), and the other, my response. In her letter CC challenges me to open up a process of dialogue about certain aspects of my research which I had given her to read. My response attempts a more authentic synthesis of some of my fundamental educational values.

Part Three entitled: 'Echoes: Returning to the Golden Tapestry' was completed in 1994. It draws on the significance of the work in the previous two parts and makes a claim that a synthesis between the ethics, aesthetics and ontology of my practice in education is creating my own living educational theory. Within this presentation I show how I use fictional forms as an ontological basis for my explanation.

Part Four entitled: 'My educational knowledge: creating my own living educational theory' was written in 1996. It is the conclusion to the thesis, and consists of an adapted article presented at the 1996 American Educational Research Association (AERA) Conference about my work with some Year Nine girls as I helped them to articulate their own educational standards of judgement about the work they were doing in English. It is interpolated by comments which point towards the extent of my educational development in the thesis and ends with part of the paper I included in full in The General Prologue as an expression of my own living educational theory. It ends with conclusions about the educational validity of the text as a whole.

Each Part has, in this resubmission, a Prologue and an Epilogue. The function of **the Prologues** is to alert the reader to what s/he is about to read,

particularly from the point of view of how the subsequent Part represents my own educational development from within an action research perspective.

The Epilogues are concerned with drawing out the educational significance of my own development in order to avoid the excessive interpretation required on behalf of the reader which was pointed out after the previous submission. They will also begin to develop an evaluation of each part through the criteria I am developing for judgement described in this Introduction.

Broadly, there are four dimensions which characterise my research into my educational practice. These are concerned with my aesthetics, ethics, ontology and educational knowledge. Each of the four Parts can be seen specifically as emphasising different strands. (Part One deals largely with my aesthetics, Part Two with my ethics, Part Three with my ontology and Part Four with my educational knowledge.) This is not to suggest that each dimension is not present in each of the Parts and I do not wish to falsify this account by giving a simplistic overview through an analysis which suggests that each dimension is divisible from the other in my practice with students and pupils. Indeed the meanings I am giving to, and inferring from, aesthetics and knowledge, rest in their synthesis of other aspects. This thesis however, is making claims to knowledge, and what renders the knowledge educational is its reflection on, and analysis of, the ways I connect each aspect to each other aspect in order to improve the quality of learning in my own educational development and with my pupils.

In these Prologues and Epilogues I use insights derived from 'The Ancient Mariner' to enable me to explain some of my core educational values. To this end I do not qualify my interpretations of the poem through the insights of

others because this thesis is not about my literary understanding of the poem, but a description and explanation of my educative relationships and educational development through my developing ontological insights. (See pages 85 - 87 in this Introduction for a description of the ways in which I am using the term ontological in this thesis and also the Epilogue to Part Three.) The insights I derive from the poem are metaphorical. They are my insights and that is the point. I am not trying to convince you about the poem, but simply using it as a metaphorical device to illuminate the four dimensions of my educational practice (see above). It would therefore not be helpful for me to deflect the focus of this text through an intense literary analysis of the poem as I go along.

b) Developing educational standards of judgement:

Apart from a thesis which describes and explains a series of educational processes, I am offering you here a text which both extrapolates and develops a series of criteria by which it can be judged. Thus in Part One, I am consciously seeking the standards of judgement by which I can validate my educational processes. In Part Two I show something of the fruits of such an endeavour although it is not, to my mind, specific enough in that area and the Epilogue explores the reasons why. In Part Three, however, I recognise the importance of continuing to interrogate the standards of judgement I am applying to my practice and seek a greater synthesis within the practice and its analysis. This process continues in Part Four and becomes particularly significant as I enable a group of Year Nine English students to develop their own educational standards of judgement in their self-chosen projects as part of their own action enquiries into how they can improve the quality of their work in our English lessons. Then as a result of the learning I did during that process, I analyse what happens later with a class of Year Seven pupils as they seek to understand more about 'The Ancient Mariner' poem we are

studying and evaluate their own learning about it. **The processes of articulating the developmental educational standards of judgement, both in this text and in my practice, characterise my own educational development.**

I would like to explain at this point the two reasons for the length of my thesis. First it is a representation of my own educational development which has occurred in three distinct areas of research - Initial Teacher Education, Continuing Professional Development and teaching English in the classroom - over six years. Secondly in this resubmission I didn't want to lose any of the richness as I added a more substantial theoretical and explanatory contextualisation for the enquiries undertaken.

Third: The Quality of Dialogue and the Validity of this Text

In this third part of the Introduction I am now going to offer you a more detailed analysis of the links I would like you to make between the quality of dialogue and the educational validity of this text. This is in order for you to understand the links between my educational standards of judgement and the processes of education I engage in.

I will now outline the standards of judgement through which I believe this thesis is best understood and through which its educational validity is focused. By the term educational 'validity' I mean the educational quality of the procedures (usually dialogue) I encourage within the learning process. Bernstein (1983) outlines an approach to dialogue which:

> *'emphasizes the type of mutuality, sharing, respect and equality*
> *required or genuine dialogue, and the principle of dialogue is*

universalized when he [Gadamer] endorses the principle of freedom

that encompasses all of humanity.' (p.190)

In terms of this thesis I wish the validity of my claims to educational development and explanation to be judged (amongst other aspects to be highlighted in this Introduction) by the extent to which qualities such as mutuality (Parts Two and Three), sharing and respect (Parts One, Two, Three and Four) and equality in the pursuit of dialogue (Parts One, Three, and Four), are evolved within my educative relationships.

In this thesis I put forward the claim that my educative relationships are central to the quality of the learning experiences we (my students and I) share. I see my educative relationships as developmental and not static, just as I perceive education itself to be a developmental process. I believe that the quality of my educative relationships hinges upon the quality of dialogue I can encourage. As I wish this thesis to be judged as a contribution to educational knowledge, I think that the actions, writing, reflections and conclusions put forward could be deemed valid or not in terms of the extent to which I can describe and explain how I am contributing to the educational development of myself and my students and pupils through the quality of dialogue I encourage. Griffiths (1995) makes a similar point (although she uses the term 'conversation' as one which denotes continuing interpretation by a researcher of a text or theory - in this case feminism and post-modernism - rather than simply with another human being). She writes:

'The conversation that educational researchers have...must be a

continuing one, a conversation which informs ongoing research

rather than produces yet another method or methodology to choose

or reject.' (p.233)

I want my educative conversations with my students and pupils to have this generative potential.

Fourth: Educational Standards of Judgement

This fourth section of the Introduction is concerned with establishing the links between aspects of this thesis and ways of judging its educational validity.

Because this thesis is concerned with evolving processes of evaluation within the work itself, I want to emphasise right from the beginning, the necessity of formulating standards of judgement which are evolving as the work itself evolves. I will elaborate upon this in the section on dialectical forms **(5.2.3)** as the notion of developmental standards of judgement is more appropriately dealt with when discussing the potential for transformation in an educational process. The first three standards of judgement in the following exposition: a) 'self evaluation', b) 'the educational nature of this thesis', and c) 'rationality', are ones which should permeate every aspect of this thesis: they are the lenses through which I seek to make meanings. The standards of judgement discussed under Representation and Meaning in this Introduction should be understood as being in a dialectical relationship to their representation in this thesis and as influential on the emerging knowledge.

a)

Self evaluation:

Clarke et al (1993) have this to say about action research reports, of which I am claiming this thesis is one:

'a) the aims [of the report] will have to be made explicit, if only in
retrospect;
b) (most importantly) that the action researcher has an obligation to
articulate the criteria upon which their own work is to be judged; i.e. to
inform the reader about how to read (or view) it.' (p. 491)

They go on to say:

'We must avoid making yet another set of 'technical' prescriptions as a
means of controlling others' research, as opposed to addressing the
questions of value and validity raised by our efforts at researching our
own practice.' (p.491)

I am writing this thesis as well at a time when there seems to be little
agreement about the nature of what constitutes validity or truth in
educational research. Uncertainty seems to be the only certainty (Bernstein,
1983; Kincheloe, 1991; Kemmis, 1992; Lincoln, 1993). In this thesis I am not
trying to reveal consensus as a necessary parameter for validity in the work I
am doing. Indeed, I am not so much troubled by the notion that different
schools of thought cannot agree about what constitutes truth and validity in
educational research, than by the idea that one school of thought attributes to
itself right and truth against all-comers.

b)

The educational nature of this thesis:

I want to stress the educational nature of this thesis from the outset. In a
symposium paper for the 1994 American Educational Research Association
Conference in New Orleans, Munby (1994), states that the symposium aims to
reveal the significance of distinguishing between:

'the systemic functions - 'the forms and structures, processes and procedures, put in place to carry out the business of schooling' - and the educative purposes of schooling.' (abstract)

Munby goes on to say that teacher education has overemphasized the former at the expense of the latter. In so doing, he argues, the educational quality is necessarily limited, and does not enable a process of enquiry through which people come to understand what they are able to achieve in the name of education. I take distinct issue with the view, however, when Fenstermacher (1992), for example, says that despite the overemphasis on the 'systemics' of learning in initial teacher-education the place of universities in teacher education should be diminished. I believe that sections of this thesis show the educative value of myself as a university tutor playing an important role in the educational development of my students. Through their subsequent professional development, they in turn are able to offer descriptions and explanations of how they have helped to improve the quality of learning with their pupils. The cyclical nature of the teacher as learner (see McNiff, 1993) is a crucial one at the heart of the learning processes of myself and my students revealed in this thesis. I develop this theme at length in the Epilogue to Part Four.

c)

Rationality:

My aim in this Introduction is to acquaint you with the areas of research which you will encounter in this thesis in such a way to convince you of the rationality of the conclusions. MacIntrye (1990) says that in coming to conclusions within a university there must be:

'a...general academic consensus, both within and between disciplines, as   to what is to be accounted as at least some sort of relevant reason for

upholding or advancing any particular conclusion.' (p.7)

Thomists would contend that:

'it is in moving from sense experience to true judgement that the mind

first perfects itself.' (MacIntyre, 1990: 166)

The whole of my first claim in this thesis - *'the development of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships has educational use-value in judging the quality of my educational practice,'* is predicated upon the belief that bringing the power of reflection to my intuitions and actions will improve the educational quality of those actions. I would therefore ask you to judge this text's validity partly by the degree to which I reveal that the processes described and explained in this thesis have been rationally defensible ones. I would contend that the degree of rationality runs parallel to the quality of my educational development.

MacIntyre (1990) concludes that universities should become places of:

'constrained disagreement, of imposed participation in conflict in which   a central responsibility of higher education would be to initiate students

into conflict,' (p.231)

rather than into 'unconstrained agreements.' (p.230)

He reasons that:

'systematically conducted controversy would itself contribute to

  systematically conducted moral...enquiry...and students [would be]

  initiated into both enquiry and controversy.' (p.231)

I would like one of the ways in which you judge the validity of this thesis as an original contribution to educational knowledge, to be partly determined through my ability to convey to you the rationality of what I am doing in the name of education. This contribution entails an implicit concern for enquiry and constrained disagreement. This means that I am not attempting with my students to come to consensus so much as to a state of awareness in which we can agree to differ if necessary. Sometimes arriving at such a state is itself educational as I hope to show throughout this work. As I have already implied, genuine dialogue can sometimes mean that no consensus can be reached. The risks (Winter, 1989) of such open-ended discourse, alluded to in The General Prologue, are addressed as well in Parts One and Four.

This idea of constrained disagreement impinges as well on your response to this thesis: it is possible that you will not be sympathetic to the ideas, processes and conclusions put forward in this text. I hope, however, that I am able to persuade you through the clarity of the writing, that there is a value in a process of education which makes sense within its own parameters, whilst showing itself concerned with the judgements of others. This is another way in which you can judge the validity of this present writing: **Do I show myself concerned with rational arguments derived from my own educational experiences and the appropriate views of others concerned in the process?**

I agree with the values in MacIntyre's (1990) comments, that what I am trying to do in this thesis is to set out:

'a framework for a type of narrative of moral enquiry to be enacted by

individuals who do and will exhibit their rationality by participating in

the forms of rationality established by and through a particular tradition

and indeed, insofar as moral enquiry is integral to the moral life itself,

a framework for a set of narratives of particular lives.' (p.129-130)

He also says in lament at the disappearance of a moral tradition of enquiry, (one to which I subscribe):

'Questions of truth in morality...have become matters for private

allegiance, (p.217)

rather, than the public matters of debate and concern which, he feels (and I agree) should be the purpose of the modern university. This thesis shows an increasing commitment to a process of moral enquiry in education, viewing education itself as a 'value-laden practical activity' (Peters, 1966), and defends such moral enquiry upon rationally defensible bases.

Fifth: Representation and Meaning:

This section represents the greatest concentration in this Introduction on the dialectic between representation and meaning I explore later in the thesis through reflections on my educational practice. It highlights the particular educational standards of judgement by which I invite you to judge the educational validity of this text and their epistemological significance in terms of educational knowledge.

Once again I would like to alert you to the experimental nature of this thesis' own representation which, as I have already mentioned in reference to Eisner

(1993), is necessary in the conveying of various types of meanings. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) write about the problematic nature of representation in qualitative research, that it is, for example, a fallacy that:

'researchers can directly capture lived experience. Such experience...is created in the social text written by the researcher. This is the representational crisis. It confronts the inescapable problem of representation but does so within a framework that makes the direct link between experience and text problematic.' (p.11)

I accept their argument to the extent that I had already grounded my thesis in that way of seeing before reading their text. Because I perceive the links between representation and meaning to affect meanings, I wish to alert you to the assumption which this thesis is making: **the constructions of representation in this text act as lenses through which you are able to perceive my meanings.** This is why in this Introduction and the thesis as a whole I filter an explanation of the various aspects of my educational practice, claims to know, and standards of judgement through the ways in which I represent them. Thus my three claims to educational knowledge:

1) The development of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships has educational use-value in judging the quality of my educational practice;
2) The analysis of my own fiction is an ontological guide to my effectiveness in turning my educational values into action;
3) I am developing my own living educational theory through a synthesis of my ontological, aesthetic and ethical concerns,

are continually highlighted through an explanation of the dialectical nature of meaning with representation. These claims to knowledge interact in their turn with the educational standards of judgement which can be used to test the validity of this claim to educational knowledge. All the above are expressions of my educational development, rendered here as my living educational theory. This interrelatedness might explain the difficulty I have had in separating them in preparation for this Introduction. However I would like to take each of them in turn and explain their significance to this thesis so that when you encounter their manifestations within the text, you should be in a position to judge not only my ability to explicate them, but also their educational validity. In this thesis I will explain how perceiving, and then acting on, the link between standards of judgement and the aspects being judged as aesthetic, can enhance the educational nature of my own enquiry. I will also show that my own understanding of what constitutes the evolution of educational standards of judgement is an aspect which characterises my educational development, but I will go into more detail about that shortly.

Whilst on the subject of representation and meaning, I also wish to mention that the form of this Introduction differs from the rest of this text in the sense that it is wholly propositional rather than in the dialectical forms which I advocate elsewhere (see Section **5.2.3**). I am concerned at this stage more with enabling you to ground your understanding of the rest of the thesis than I am about my own authenticity as an educational writer. (See also **5.3.4** of this Introduction.) The desire for authenticity was one of the reasons I wrote The General Prologue. It is, I believe, a more fitting form of representation to convey particular values than this Introduction might appear to convey. However, I seek to explain my educational knowledge, not just to represent it and hence the propositional form of this Introduction is, I believe, an

appropriate way of conveying the various aspects of my educational values at this stage in the text.

In the following section, each of my three original claims to educational knowledge in the thesis are framed as expressions of my own educational development. Their explanation throughout the thesis will constitute my own living educational theory.

5.1. An expression of my own educational development: the development of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships has use value in judging the quality of my educative relationships:

Let me first take the significance of a particular way of representing the processes evolved through the paradigm of individually-orientated action research. In Part One of the thesis I explain why I am engaged in such a research enquiry. When relating meaning to representation, Eisner (1993) talks about suiting means to ends:

'We exploit different forms of representation to construct meanings that might otherwise elude us...Different forms of representation can themselves be treated in different ways.' (p.6)

If, as Masterman (1974: 76) maintains, a paradigm is *'a way of seeing'*, then this way of seeing will, in the words of Lakatos (1974):

'have its own standards...A new paradigm brings a totally new rationality'. (p.178)

He goes on to write:

'If to discover is to prove, but nothing is provable, then there can be no discoveries, only discovery-claims.' (p.178)

Here I am back again with one of the ideas from Clarke et al (1993) about specifically how an action enquiry can be judged. I have come to understand the educational and political significance of aligning my work within a particular paradigm; indeed, part of my educational development can be plotted through the deepening layers of my understanding of the significance of what it means to work in the name of education within a specific kind of action research framework.

Through my research I draw the conclusion that when I am acting with a conscious degree of consistency between my paradigmatic insights and my responses to the educational and human needs of my students, that a pattern develops whose tracing is at once educational and aesthetically useful (Laidlaw, 1994c.) I claim that such perception is aesthetic for me because it enables me to access the unity within my enquiry which is to do with the links I can usefully make in my practice between the knowledge, a theory of my own being and the ethics of my practice. In Part Four I show an increased ability to draw together insights about the nature of education into an appropriately educational practice as my understanding of the aesthetics of my work develops through the application of the standard of judgement I term an aesthetic morphology. I show what I have learnt from applying this aesthetic morphology in relation to the teaching of English to two groups of girls in a local comprehensive school. In developing an aesthetic morphology as a reflexive tool, I am responding to my need to explain my own educational practice. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) write:

'The qualitative researcher...uses the tools of his or her own

methodological trade, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or

*empirical materials as are at hand...**If new tools have to be invented or***

pieced together, then the researcher will do this.' (my emphasis, p. 2)

5.1.1.

Experimental Forms

Showing the processes I have been involved in will necessitate an experimental form of representation because of the nature of the insights and processes being described and explained. I am claiming that the experimental nature of the form of parts of this thesis (in particular The General Prologue and Parts Three and Four) is justified in the sense that it is an authentic account of coming to understand and represent a process of educational research which for good reason I am not presenting in a more traditional form. I am contending that the basis for the form I present it in is a rationally-defensible one. Eisner, for example, asks:

'Why should rational processes be limited to propositional discourse or   to number?' (p.7)

I subscribe to a constructivist view of reality which influences the ways in which I am able to write about my experience. I identify with Kincheloe (1991) for example, when he writes:

'Post-formal thinkers/researchers are comfortable with the uncertain,

tentative nature of knowledge emerging from critical constructivist

research. They are tolerant of contradiction and value the attempt to

integrate ostensibly dissimilar phenomena into new, revealing

syntheses'. (p.44)

I would like this thesis to reveal forms of practice, which are at once open to new ideas, but which emphasise processes of rigour (Winter, 1989; Laidlaw, 1994b) that enhance the educational nature of those processes. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) go further than Kincheloe and write about:

'fieldwork and writing blur into one another. There is in the final analysis no difference between writing and fieldwork. These two perspectives inform one another throughout.' (p.10)

If it is the case that my practice informs my writing which then informs my practice in a generative way, to articulate such seamlessness requires experimentation, just as educational action research enquiries require imagined solutions and trial and error. This thesis is a testament to my attempts to reveal in writing as authentic an explanation of my educational practice and development as I am capable. (See also in this Introduction **'Authenticity' - 5.3.4**, and **'Ontological Authenticity' - 5.3.4a**, for a fuller explanation of this point.)

5.1.2.

Systematic enquiry made public (Stenhouse, 1975)

I recognise there are areas of knowledge whose uncertainty of definition denote their complexity. In this thesis I also maintain that this uncertainty of definition can mirror the complexity of the processes of human development. One of the aims of this thesis is to untangle some of these complex aspects of human interaction within an educational context and then subject my findings to validation in order to improve, and to become accountable for, the work I am doing.

When trying to understand the nature of how we come to know, I find Popper (1972) helpful when he writes:

'We do not know: we can only guess. And our guesses are guided by

the unscientific, the metaphysical...faith in laws, in regularities which   we

can uncover, discover.' (p.278)

Whilst I am claiming this thesis is a contribution to educational rather than scientific knowledge, I would contend that my research into the nature of what I know has been scientifically systematic as has always been a requirement in educational action research. (See Hodgkinson, 1957; Elliott & Adelman, 1973; Elliott, 1977; Brock-Utne, 1980; Stenhouse, 1983; van Manen, 1984; Whitehead, 1985, 1989a&b, 1993b.) Being systematic does not automatically confer validity on any form of research as Winter (1989) explains at length. However, Popper (1972) says:

'How is the system that represents our world of experience to be

distinguished? The answer is: by the fact that it has been submitted

to tests and has stood up to tests.' (p.39)

I am claiming that within this thesis there is evidence that I have submitted my ideas and conclusions to tests, that I have shown through a process of public accountability tied into an integrated approach to evaluation and improvement, my commitment to further my understanding of my subject, education. This is in the context of trying to help others to learn how to become accountable for themselves within the workplace and to improve the quality of learning for all involved within the process. My conclusions about the ramifications of becoming accountable in educational processes are revealed most clearly in Part Four of this thesis.

5.1.3.

Locating my own experience

In this thesis I am going to present you with my world of experience in such ways as I believe are consistent with the meanings conveyed within what it means to me to learn to develop good quality educative relationships within my action research enquiries. I further believe, with Russell (1993), in the authority of my experience which has submitted its processes, insights and conclusions to systematic enquiry over time; and which incorporates the judgements of myself and others engaged within, and even outside, the research, together with a wide range of reading in the relevant literature. Russell quotes Richert (1992) on the importance of starting the process of teaching (and he goes on to deal with research as well) which is enhanced by:

'listening to yourself as an authority on your own experience...as an important part of learning (p.193)'. (p.4)

I believe that the standards of judgement which anyone makes about a claim to knowledge (Whitehead, 1985) should be actively influential in the processes of education itself. In this thesis I am concerned with substantiating an epistemological link between my own educational development, the educational validity of the processes in which I and my pupils and students engage, and the educational conclusions which we draw. I want to ensure in my work in education that I use appropriate standards of judgement at every stage. I believe that the search for the appropriate standards of judgement is itself educational, just as McNiff (1989, 1993) claims that the processes of research should themselves be educational. Substantiation of these claims is particularly to be found in Parts One and Four of the thesis.

I will now come back to my original point in this section about the far-reaching nature of a paradigm and its representation. I am making a claim in this thesis that the particular paradigm within which I am researching - i.e. individually-orientated action research - has ramifications not only for what I can come to know, but how I can represent it in this thesis. I want at this early stage to alert you to the interrelated nature of form and content.

5.2. An expression of my own educational development: my own fiction as an ontological guide to my effectiveness in turning my educational values into action:

I now want to look at the second category which impinges on the presentation and meanings of this thesis and which relates to the point in the last paragraph about the links between form and content. This section also reveals a significant perspective on my own educational development. My view about the tentative nature of reality leads me to experiment with the forms in which I present my educational writing. Although, in Eisner's words:

'experience can never be displayed in the form in which it initially

appeared', (p.7)

I will be attempting to reveal as authentic an account of the journey of my own educational development as I am able, as I describe and explain the nature of my educative relationships. The preoccupation with authenticity and its significance to the educational truth and validity of this account are issues which I deal with in depth in the most experimental sections of this thesis, (The General Prologue and Part Three) and in Part Four in the articulation of my own living educational theory. This preoccupation has

enabled me to develop a form of representation in which fiction is a pivotal aspect.

Clarke et al (1993) have this to say about fictional forms of representation:

'In some cases a format for inquiry may have been chosen which is not compatible with some of the [more traditional] research criteria (i.e. through fictional writing), and in such cases the writer must inform the reader about how the work is to be read, how it relates to the practice from which it is derived, and how it might contribute to the knowledge of others.' (p.491)

In Parts One and Three of this thesis I integrate fictional forms in a way which, I am claiming, is enabling me to make sense of educational process that are of value, both to my own educational development, and that of my students. (See also Rowland, 1991.) In Part Four I show what I have learnt from applying the fictional forms in earlier sections through the innovative integration of a literary form, as you may have already experienced in The General Prologue.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) also write:

'The search for Grand Narratives will be replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations.' (p.11)

As you read the aspects of this thesis which use fictional devices (only Part Two does not) I ask you to consider how their use enables me to portray significant educational truths. Does my use of fiction and of fictional devices enable you to come closer to an understanding of the educational nature of

this claim to knowledge and the values underlying the conclusions reached? I hope they do.

5.2.1.

The Significance of the Writing-Up Stages

I want to highlight aspects of my own educational development and the effect which it has had on the writing of this thesis. This text represents within the form itself, a development of various insights from the beginning of the writing up period (January, 1993) until now (September, 1996). The writing-up stages of an action enquiry report have been significant ones for me in coming to understand my own educational development through the analyses of my educative relationships. I will comment on this at length in Part One when considering the final report of one of my Postgraduate Education students from 1992-1993 and also in Part Four as an integral aspect of the conclusion to my thesis.

One of the most significant aspects of my learning during this period of write-up has been to do with what it means to bear my audience in mind. I believe that I show an increasing awareness throughout the thesis of keeping you in mind as I write. This is particularly evident, I believe, in the Prologues and Epilogues which were written last as a way of grounding the insights in each Part for the reader. During this process I asked myself continuously the questions: 'What does that term mean?' 'Am I making assumptions here?' and the like in the hope that I would render my text more comprehensible. I hope in this resubmission that the reader feels directly addressed and respected as someone with a valid point of view. This is allied to my growing understanding that educational writing should seek not simply to express but to make links with others (McNiff, 1989; Lomax, 1994a). When I was told by my examiners that the thesis *required excessive interpretation on the part of the*

reader', I was then in a difficult position. I didn't wish to violate the aesthetic unity of my text which was judged as having: *'a great deal of excellent work...as it stands, much of it publishable,'* but I also truly wanted to communicate to you something I believe to be of educational value.

As you will see from the contents-pages and the headings of each Part in the thesis, there is an apparent gap of about 18 months in the writing-up period. After Part Three was completed in early 1994, I administered the third World Congress on Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management here at the University of Bath. In the original thesis Part Four consisted of work done for that Congress and some new work in the classroom in 1995. In the new Part Four I have integrated some of that early classroom work with a Year Nine group into a new form which I presented at a conference during Easter, 1996. I believe this thesis now represents a greater synthesis of my seminar and classroom practice than did the original submission. It also reflects my central interest in teacher-research which I elaborate upon in the Epilogue to Part Four.

I am claiming that I develop an increasing degree of synthesis from Part One to Part Two and finally through Part Three to Part Four. I would claim that The General Prologue, and Parts Three and Four are the most experimental and profound aspects of the thesis. There is a mutual dependence between form and content in The General Prologue, and Parts Three and Four in particular in which complex ideas are mirrored within an intricate form. This is especially so in The General Prologue through its synthesis of all the dimensions which I claim constitute my own living educational theory - the ethics, ontology, aesthetics, and educational knowledge which emerge from my practice - whose understanding partly constitutes my educational

development. The rest of this thesis is an attempt to explain the educational significance of The General Prologue.

Eisner (1993) says about much recent educational research writing:

'I believe that our discourse defines neither the scope of our rationality nor the varieties of our understanding...I believe there is too much practical wisdom that tells us that the images created by literature, poetry, the visual arts, dance and music give us insights that inform us in the special ways that only artistically-rendered forms make possible.'

(p7)

I am claiming in this thesis that the form of rationality to which I subscribe, has room in it for descriptions and explanations of human experience which embrace the metaphysical as well as the physical. This is represented in the thesis through the use of extracts from 'The Ancient Mariner' by Coleridge which seek to illuminate some of the values and insights underpinning my practice. As I have researched my own educational processes, through my focus on my educative relationships, I have perceived a link between poetic forms of portrayal, metaphysical meanings and my own educational development. This growth of perception has been a gradual process within the research and has run parallel to my growing awareness of the educational implications of formal identification within a particular research paradigm. It is symbolised in The General Prologue and in each subsequent Prologue and Epilogue.

In this thesis you will see me describing and explaining particular emerging forms and structures in my educational practice (including my developmental understanding of, and location within, the individually-

oriented action research paradigm). Through these emerging forms and structures my own educational development and improvements in the quality of learning are articulated. The aesthetics of my practice are constituted by the synthesis of all these aspects of development and improvements in the quality of learning, into ways of working dedicated to growth and learning, to learners being more capable of leading full and productive lives and in which individuals, and the contexts in which the relationships are taking place, attain a mutually beneficial dialectical relationship. Part Four concludes with evidence of how my understanding through my research has improved my practice as an educator. As the writing-up stages have progressed, I have come to understand the significance of a synthesis between the emerging forms and structures of my practice (the morphology) and their worth (the aesthetic and educational value). The development of the clarity of my thinking about the significance of this synthesis is itself one of the clearest indications of my own educational development.

5.2.2.

Development of research foci

What is also of importance here is the extent to which the nature of what I have been exploring has been developing and diversifying as the research has grown. In preparation for writing up Part One I set about analysing the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships in order to enhance their educative nature. As the thesis develops, I begin to recognise the significance of explicating an aesthetic morphology within education. I become dissatisfied with that and gradually perceive the educational value of explaining a series of syntheses between strands of my educational philosophy, my methods and practical intentions. As my understanding develops through the work in the thesis (both in the writing and the

educational practice with my students and pupils) not only does the emphasis in my research interest develop and change, but also the forms in which I can express it. However, in Part Four (see also The General Prologue) I conflate all the disparate aspects of my claims to educational knowledge - which are concerned with revealing my own educational development through a synthesis of my own ethics, ontology, aesthetic and knowledge - into a form which articulates my living educational theory from within the moral values of a work of fiction. In this new form, the moral values of the fiction inspire a living process towards better educative relationships and a way of bringing the values to life in the classroom. In its written form the conclusion to the thesis synthesises what has been hitherto separable into a coherent narrative, a symbiosis between form, content, and values which has not been possible up to this point. The General Prologue is a synthesis, but its values are left largely implicit. It is the purpose of this thesis to explain the significance of what I have left largely implicit in that section.

5.2.3.

Dialectical forms

Socrates: *Who will be best able to direct the legislator in his work? Will not the user be the man?*
Heraclitus: *Yes.*
Socrates: *Must not this be he who knows how to ask questions?*
Heraclitus: *Yes.*
Socrates: *And how to answer them?*
Heraclitus: *Yes.*
Socrates: *And him who knows how to ask and answer, you would call a dialectician?'*

(from 'Cratylus', by Plato.)

This part of the Introduction is the most crucial to an understanding of this section and of the thesis as a whole. The choice to represent my thesis dialectically is a considered one and attempts to fulfil Winter's (1989) notion of change as a fundamental aspect of any process. In this thesis I am contending that an understanding of the way in which things change is a

prerequisite for any educational process. Winter says about the potential of change:

'The dialectical approach...[asserts] the change process as a fundamental axiom. The argument is as follows: individuals are a product of their social world, but this social world is structured as a series of contradictions, and is thus in a continuous process of change; its influence upon individuals is thus both conflicting and varying, and can thus never be either unambiguous and final.' (p.51)

It has been part of my own educational development to recognise the significance of representing my research in a dialectical form. There is a tradition, in particular amongst the action researchers at Bath University with Jack Whitehead, to aspire towards dialectical forms of representation (Larter, 1988; Gurney, 1988; McNiff, 1988, 1989, 1992, 1993; Eames, 1990, 1993, 1995; Evans, 1995; Whitehead, 1993b; Hughes, 1996). Much of the published literature specifically about dialectics does not satisfy me, however. In Ilyenkov (1977) there is an expression of a truth divorced from relationships and experiences in the world. It is a truth coined from abstract thinking as if human beings themselves are abstract and do not contain anything but causal impulses: who function like machines. In Ilyenkov's work I am confronted with an analytical representation of reality which does not ground knowledge within human relationships.

Dialecticians such as like Belenky et al (1986), Greene (1986), Ely et al (1991, 1993), Noddings & Witherell (1991), take human relationships as their bedrock of meaning. I am aware that all these are female. Although it is not my aim in this thesis to expand much on this aspect, I am coming to the conclusion that there is a significant gender difference operating here, which

in my experience hinges upon a woman's ability to place a higher value on relationships, both between individuals, and between people and their ideas. Others have not necessarily subscribed to this view. (See Weiner, 1993). My stance on reality is one in which the categorisation and compartmentalisation of ideas are not as prominent characteristics as in the work of male dialecticians such as Ilyenkov, for example.

In the process of writing this thesis, however, I have derived much insight from Ilyenkov's 1977 text 'Dialectical Logic'. I see a limitation, however, within the form of presentation of his ideas. All the women cited above, in particular Witherell & Noddings, and Belenky et al, are at pains to illustrate what a **dialectic in action** looks like and how it relates to people's lives. In Part One I go into some detail about a female way of knowing (Belenky et al, 1986), although I do not subscribe particularly to a feminist (politicised) stance. I am however, concerned that this thesis represents a dialectical form in action because I believe that the processes which lead me to write in this form are those which constitute good educational practice, and embody the values I want to live in my educative relationships. In the Epilogue to Part Four I go into detail about how I believe that I have gone further than Ilyenkov in the sense that I have demonstrated, rather than only written about, the dialectical processes I have been involved in. In addition I show in the thesis what I have learnt from being engaged within a dialectical process and what it means to my own educational development.

In other words I represent my work with students, pupils and colleagues in ways which show how development has taken place. I show in the thesis our correspondence, conversations, interactions and growth of ideas and perspectives. I reveal how this process both of practice and representation enables me and others to learn (see also Rowland, 1994). The emphasis on

dialectical forms of representation becomes progressively pronounced and focused throughout the thesis, with The General Prologue, and Parts Three, and Four achieving the highest concentration of my educational values in an apposite form. Although in the thesis as a whole I am concerned to explore the dialectics of practice, in Part Four I begin to characterise the responsibilities incurred in the dialectic between the individual and society in a more ethical way. (See **5.3.3**.) Of using dialectics as an approach to the collection and subsequent analysis of data collected in a dialectical enquiry, Winter (1989) says the following:

'dialectics gives us a principled basis for making selections.' (p.51)

I agree with this statement and find much within the works already cited in this section upon which to base my own understanding of dialectics and through which you may, if you wish, ground your own grasp of the work I am doing in this thesis.

Before going on to elucidate my ideas about my living educational theory it is necessary for me to point out a connection that is increasingly made within this text relating to the purpose of representing my thesis dialectically with the educational value of the work itself. All of this section in the Introduction is dealing with Representation and Meaning. I have discussed the importance as I see it of representing my experience dialectically because of the authenticity which I perceive as a necessary aspect of my educational writing and because I view representation and meaning as linked in the construction of knowledge. Let me add a further dimension to this section which is concerned with authenticity, dialectical representation and the meaning of what I am doing, within a framework which seeks to find appropriate standards of judgement by which to test the validity of this text.

In Parts One, Two and Three of this thesis I struggle to articulate a growing intuition about the educational significance of my own understanding of my educational development. In Part Four I finally express this growing awareness as an expression of an 'immanent dialectic'. By this term I understand a process whose significance can only emerge in practice over time. If, at the heart of what I do, is a truth whose significance I will never quite grasp in the doing and at the time I do it, I must therefore make allowances for that within my representations of it. At best I will be able to point towards the possible significance of what I do and the meanings inherent within actions, but I will not be able to represent the actions themselves or the significance of them at the time. **If** this is a valid statement, then it follows that the educational standards of judgement by which I perceive my educational development should be appraised in this thesis, must themselves express the dialectical nature of the processes through which I lend educational significance to my actions and words. In other words I believe that there should be an exchange of meaning between educational standards of judgement and the objects of their validation in this thesis, just as I see that there is an exchange of meaning between actions and educational reflections on their significance. (See Laidlaw, 1994a, written in response to Lomax, 1994b on the subject of the educational value of dialectical standards of judgement.)

5.3. An expression of my own educational development: the development of my own living educational theory:

I come now to the third way in which the meanings in this thesis and its attendant claim to educational knowledge interact with its forms of representation and reveal my own educational development in the process. The question I want you to bear in mind from this section of the Introduction

is: **How valid is my claim to be developing my own living educational theory?**

As I mentioned before, within the work I have been doing (of which this thesis is a part) my ability to write about the significance of developing my own living educational theory is closely linked to my own educational development. Indeed Eraut (1993) calls for new ways of looking at knowledge and theory within the realm of educational management. I think his ideas are applicable to educational research as a whole, particularly when he advocates evolving such knowledge to enable it to explain educational practice more comprehensively. He says :

'Such knowledge needs to be widely shared. In order to take control

over their own professional learning, teachers...need to have some

awareness of their own personal knowledge base: what is held in

common with others, what is purely personal, what is habit, what is

intuitive, what is proven, what is fallible, what is authentic, what they

know, what they don't know, how they work, how they evaluate their

work, what frameworks and assumptions underpin their thinking.'

(p.225)

The emphasis placed upon the processes leading to accountability are crucial to my work in education. Polanyi's (1958) notion of the ethics of individuals acting responsibly and with universal intent within the work they are doing with others, comes to mind here and is discussed in particular in Part One. Whitehead (1989b) maintains that educational knowledge and theory are being constituted by individuals' descriptions and explanations of their practice as they become accountable to others about the work they do in the name of education. As an advocate of individually-orientated action research

I adhere to this view. In this thesis I show a developing consciousness in the creation of my own living educational theory which requires a synthesis between the ethics, ontology and knowledge of my practice in order to achieve an educationally aesthetic significance (Parts Two, Three and Four); and in which ontology is related closely to notions of authenticity which I will explain in **5.3.4. & 5.3.4.a**. My insights derived from this aesthetic significance are themselves then capable of being fed back into my educative relationships in educational ways. In other words, developing my own living educational theory becomes educationally helpful in improving the quality of learning, just as an application of the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships has use-value in improving the quality of my educational practice. I demonstrate the similarity of the links I have just made in the Epilogue to Part Four.

5.3.1.

Use-Value

I see use-value (Whitehead and Foster, 1984) as a crucial aspect of any process of educational research. I believe that evolving my own living educational theory to be a useful endeavour. Writing up this thesis has developed, I believe, the clarity of my thinking and ways of expressing that thinking in action and writing. I wish this thesis to be judged partly through the clarity of my writing as I perceive a link between clarity of expression and educational use-value. (See, for example, Anderson, 1992 who writes lucidly about intentions and actions in creating change and focuses specifically on the use-value of applying method and philosophy for the benefit of those involved in the processes of innovation.)

Meanings for me are related to people, their needs and their view of the significance of their own experiences. I see trying to work with, and

consequently represent, ways of improving human existence as educational. Feyerabend (1974) writes:

'It seems to me that happiness and the full development of an

individual human being is now as ever the highest possible value.

(p.210)

He goes on to say that:

'we need a methodology and a set of institutions which enable us to lose   as

little as possible of what we are capable of doing and which force us as

little as possible to deviate from our natural inclinations.' (p.210)

In this text I attempt to reveal a high level of concern for individuals as I show what it means to help them realise their own potential partly by enabling their own words to come through undistorted in what I write. The processes which it is necessary to go through in order for the students' own words to be validly represented in this text, have determined to an extent the content of our educative relationships. This principle has also been true for the students, for whom a validating principle on which their own action enquiry reports are judged, is based upon the degree to which their own pupils' voices come through in the texts. I go into some considerable detail about this aspect of the significance of the links between representation and meaning in Part One of the thesis. My efforts to enable my students to speak for themselves resonate powerfully with Foucault's (1980 - ed. Gordon) words:

'You were the first to teach us something absolutely fundamental: the

indignity of speaking for others...and to appreciate...that only those

directly concerned can speak in a practical way on their own behalf.'

(p.41)

40

Foucault highlights here what is also my own desire - to develop strategies whereby my students can learn to speak for themselves about their own concerns and enable their pupils to do the same. I believe (see Laidlaw, 1994b) with Dewey (1916) that one of the aims of education is to enable people to lead full and productive lives. One of the ways in which this can be effected is to help them in an educational context to understand what it means to take responsibility for their own learning. I have found that helping individuals to locate their own values is a powerful aid to learning. Thus for me, there is an educational use-value in enabling students to speak for themselves. I go into detail about this in different ways throughout this text.

The degree to which you perceive my students speaking for themselves in this text is also a criterion through which I wish this text to be judged. I am concerned that some recent literature concerning teachers (see Calderhead, 1987; ed. Goodson, 1992; ed. Day et al, 1993; Huberman, 1993;) concentrates on academic research **about** teachers' thinking and practice rather than presenting the authors' engagement with individual teachers as they try to improve their practice. (A notable exception to this is McNiff and Collins' (1994) text about the work of some action researchers in Ireland in which individual teachers and pupils speak on their own behalf about issues which concern them.) In Part Four and in its Epilogue I expand on what it means to my educational development to be engaging in processes in which pupils are speaking about issues which concern them. Improving practice is one of my primary aims as an educator and in Parts Three and Four I believe I show this most effectively. In the Epilogues I point out where I now feel I may have failed to do this. In this thesis I take care to show that my understanding and educational knowledge are the result of my collaboration with teacher education students, for example, or pupils in the classroom, rather than from

outside studies conducted **on** them. The stance of the researcher as a co-worker is one of the primary perspectives of an individually-oriented action researcher who sees herself as an integral part of the research process and in fact indistinguishable from it. (See Denzin and Lincoln (1994) for confirmation of this view.)

5.3.2.

Truth and Concern for Individuals

Related to this latter point is my desire to represent a view of knowledge in which truth and concern for individuals can be seen to be interrelated (Belenky et al, 1986; Noddings & Witherell, 1991). I see this view of knowledge as educational within an educative relationship. Such a view would also appear to be pivotal in a thesis which is partly concerned with judging the quality of my educative relationships, when the educative factor constitutes a search for truth and the relationship is often articulated through a concern for individuals. In addition it is a way of linking the 'I' of an action research enquiry with the context in which it is enacted (the dialectical nature of individually-orientated action enquiries). Unlike Rorty (1979), and like Eisner, I want to pursue the truth, not give it up. I want Fenstermacher's (1992) notion of what is educational (as opposed to the systemics) to permeate my action in a pursuit of truth which sees as pivotal the ethics of such an endeavour. Truth, however, does not exist for me externally to my ability to perceive it, but in dialectical relationship with the people who are pursuing it and in the contexts in which the action takes place.

An educationally significant dialectic for me is created between truth and concern for individuals. I am inspired by living dialectics. In this thesis I will be pursuing a dialectical form of representation, acknowledging that although the representation cannot be the experience itself, I can, as I stated

before, portray the experience with a satisfying degree of authenticity. And because my own educational development is in part characterised through my growing understanding of the significance of a dialectical form of representation, this text's inner consistency and educational validity reveal a developmental commitment to a dialectical form. I seek to show a new form of dialectical representation in which there is not only a concern to articulate 'mutual truths' derived from educative relationships over time, but also a regard for theory which is itself woven into the fabric of the practical dialectic between truth and concern for individuals; and this in a form which emphasises each of these factors. Within this dialectical form I hold on to the art of the dialectician in retaining simultaneously the one and the many. In other words I maintain an ability to break down into component parts and to synthesise from my experiences in education in what I am claiming is a rational account, lending itself to both analytical and holistic interpretation. In this thesis the Introduction, the Prologues and Epilogues represent the many, for example, and the General Prologue holds together all the dimensions of my educational enquiry.

5.3.3.

Ethics

The link between my living educational theory and its representation within this thesis is also important at the point of making conscious in my practice what the ethics of the processes my students, pupils and I are engaged in, signify in terms of the conclusions we can draw about our experiences. This point is linked as well with my earlier comment about Foucault's and Feyerabend's insights. Habermas (1974) says:

> *'Only communicative ethics guarantees the generality of admissible*
> *norms and the autonomy of acting subjects solely through the*

discursive redeemability of the validity claims with which norms

appear. That is, generality is guaranteed in that the only norms that

may claim   generality are those on which everyone affected

agrees...without constraint...Only communicative ethics is

universal...Only communicative ethics guarantees autonomy in that it

carries on the process of the insertion of drive potentials into a

communicative structure of action -   that is, the socialization

   process.' (p.89)

In words which relate to my own educational context: the ways in which my students, pupils and I come to understand and carry out our practice and then are able to write about it - are validated in part through the extent to which we subject and justify our findings to each other and to the contexts in which the practice is located. This idea relates closely to Clarke's et al (1993) view about what constitutes validity in an action research enquiry. I take this point up specifically in the Epilogues. I am also claiming in this thesis that such processes of justification help to constitute my practice as educational, as I argue in particular in the Epilogues to Parts One and Two.

What I am claiming also constitutes educational knowledge and theory within this text, is the extent to which I show how I become accountable for the degree of concern with which I enable the voices of my students to come through in this account. Enabling students to 'speak with their own voices' seems to me to be an ethical issue because it has an effect on the processes we can engage in (as I discuss in Parts One, Two and Four and the Epilogue to Part Two). In my experience, enabling such self-expression is itself a democratising process (Laidlaw, 1994b) and if such a process can become part of the subject of the dialogues I and other learners are engaged in, this would

appear to strengthen the democracy of the processes themselves (Laidlaw, 1994b, 1996).

In this thesis I am concerned to describe and explain how values such as **democracy** emerge in my educational practice over time and how such an emergence helps me to improve my educational practice with students and pupils. In Part Four I offer a specific explanation of what it means for my own educational development to have an increasing focus on a democratic standard of judgement by which I can partially evaluate the educational quality of the processes I am engaging in with pupils.

In this thesis I describe and explain other ethical values which have emerged in the course of my educational practice over time. These values are **'responsibility'** - described and explained throughout the thesis, but specifically in the Epilogue to Part Two and in Part Four, and **'awe'** (Epilogue to Part Two); in addition the value of **'trustworthiness'** (Epilogue to Part Four) emerged as I was trying to explain the educational nature of my own knowledge within this resubmission.

Furthermore, the value I am placing on democratising my educational practice and responsibility have emerged in a dialectical relationship and this affects the knowledge I can come to about their meanings. This is evident in Part Four. In the Epilogue to Part Two I explain my understanding of what responsibility meant to my educational practice in 1993/4 when I wrote Part Two, and then what it means in retrospect from my more developed understanding in 1996. In Part Four I show how my understanding of linking the educational use-value of both responsibility and the democratising of the educational processes has deepened, and what this understanding means to my own educational development and my attempts to improve the quality of

learning. I am claiming that this understanding is partly achieved through my negotiation with pupils about how they might articulate their own educational standards of judgement as a way of taking an appropriate responsibility for their own learning as well as improving its educational quality. In addition, my own educational development is highlighted through my own concern to evolve developmental standards of judgement by which my own work in education (for example this thesis) can be evaluated.

5.3.4.

Authenticity

Furthermore I want to emphasise that the authenticity of my account can partly be judged by the ways in which I represent and show in practice, the concern I have taken to ensure that the words and experiences of my students have not been distorted through my writing. By this I am taking into account the ethical implications of enabling others to speak for themselves (Foucault, 1980). This goes further than Winter's (1989) notions of rigour to be applied to an action research account and links the rigour of my processes to my own living educational theory. If, as Clarke et al (1993) advocate, I am partly to set the standards of judgement through which you can judge the validity of this action research enquiry's claim to knowledge, then I would like authenticity to be one of the criteria you use. In Part Three I go into detail about what I understand by 'authenticity', and in Part Four I extend that through my evaluation of my work in his thesis to date, but a brief description here might be useful. By authenticity I mean that quality which I bring to education which ensures that I reveal **in action and representation** those processes which encourage a developing synthesis between the ethics, ontology and aesthetics of my educational practice and a commitment to enabling the search for mutual and educational truths for all concerned within the learning process and the context (see in particular Part Two with its new Epilogue).

This also must concern itself with representing as rigorously as possible the reality of the immanent dialectic at the heart of all the educational processes within which I am living. In other words I would like you to consider these two questions:

1) Does this thesis open up to critical discourse, to you and to the learners represented within it, the educational nature and purpose of the processes I engage in?
2) Does this thesis reveal the educational values emerging with the learners (myself and my students and pupils) in action over time?

5.3.4.a

Ontological Authenticity

This is one of the most difficult areas of my experience to describe and explain. In this thesis I wish to represent my understanding of 'ontology' as a theory of my own being, an example of which is to be found at the very beginning of the General Prologue. Hanfling (1992), for example, refers to ontology as: *'a study of being in the abstract,'* (p.75). However, it is the explanation of ontological experiences, as Paskow (1988) suggests, that are problematic in verification:

> *'Since I often experience the physical world as filled with meaning*
> *or significance, how can my experience be reconciled with an*
> *'objective' or scientific perspective that affirms that the physical*
> *world has no such meaning or significance?...This problem I will*
> *unrigorously characterise as as the paradox of the subjective and*
> *the objective, <u>my</u> world versus <u>the</u> world.'* (p.151)

In this thesis I attempt to characterise the uncharacterisable as I try to show what it means for my own educational development and living educational theory to value a state of being which is neither subjective nor objective but has an openness to an awareness of self and others which enables me to touch what I value in Life itself. In a sense simultaneously to value others as I value myself. Tillich (1952) says this:

'It is the function of an ontological concept to use some realm of experience to point towards the characteristics of being-itself which lie above the split between subjectivity and objectivity and which therefore cannot be expressed literally in terms taken from the subjective or the objective side. Ontology speaks analogously. Being as being transcends objectivity as well as subjectivity. But in order to approach it cognitively one must use both. And one can do so because both are rooted in that which transcends them, in being-itself. It is in the light of this consideration that the ontological concepts referred to must be interpreted. They must be understood not literally but analogously.'

(p.34/5)

In this thesis I show a valuing of subjective and objective forms of understanding. Where my concern to know my own ontology becomes educational is in the nature of its effect on myself and others. Why I care about ontological authenticity as a criterion in this thesis is to do with the degree to which you too can believe my claim that such knowledge is educationally useful in my own educational development and living educational theory. It is linked therefore to the value of 'trustworthiness' which emerged at the time of writing the Epilogue to Part Four and as I explain it there.

Sixth: Standards of judgement again: an aesthetic morphology as an expression of an immanent dialectic

Now that I have outlined in detail the links I am making in this thesis between representation and meaning in developing educational standards of judgement grounded in particular values, I would like to return my attention to the first claim to educational knowledge which impinges on the notion of the 'immanent dialectic' highlighted earlier in this Introduction.

I have increasingly realised that I find it appropriate to apply criteria for judgement in an developmental way. If I advocate a developmental approach to educational research, for example, and if at the heart of what I do is the reality of an immanent dialectic, then it seems fitting to encourage an understanding of the standards of judgement I will apply to this developmental process, in a developmental way. In other words instead of applying a set of criteria to the work that I have done in education as represented in this thesis, it seems more authentic for me to reveal how the standards' development affects the processes of education itself **as they occur**, as well as in retrospect. In other words I want to develop responsive as well as diagnostic standards of judgement, to use them to point forward and then to help me to understand the significance of the educational processes I and the students and pupils have been involved in. One of the purposes of the Epilogues will be to look back at the educational standards of judgement and to see how they are changing, to distil meanings and to draw conclusions about the central values emerging in the creation of my own living educational theory.

One of the key concepts in this thesis is the importance of trying to present an authentic expression of the development of an educational process, although I recognise that I can only point towards the significance of a process after it

has occurred and not during it. What I have discovered with my application of an aesthetic morphology is a way of analysing and coming close to a representation of what an immanent dialectic looks like. The aesthetic morphology - because of its relationship to development - is able to give voice to the contradiction at the heart of a dialectical process of representation. It goes some way to bridging the dialectic between process and representation, between truth and time, and between action and significance.

I believe my educational values are only revealed **in practice over time** as I interact with new people and contexts. I would suggest that my educational standards of judgement have a similar morphology. Such a dialectical process - encouraging developmental educational standards of judgement from the ones I set out with - has the potential, then, not only to change the practice, but also the standards of judgement themselves. In this thesis I advocate a more dialectical relationship between the standards of judgement and the processes of education and believe that this exemplifies an immanent dialectic at work - the process by which meanings emerge through practice over time - which Whitehead (1989b), Evans (1995), and Hughes (1996) and I in this thesis would argue constitutes living educational theory. This thesis claims to make an original contribution to educational theory. One of the distinguishing features of this thesis' claim to original educational knowledge is in the living nature of its conclusions.

Therefore, I would like my action research to be judged by my own criteria as well as perceiving and integrating the values of others. I believe that the criteria by which we judge educational writing should not exist in a one-way relationship, but that the criteria themselves may be open to interpretation and change through the work of the individuals applying them. I believe that part of the rigour of my action research account should consist in its explicit

ability to accord to, and subsequently explain, a set of developing standards of judgement. I develop this in detail in Part Four.

As I stated before in the **Second** Section of this Introduction, my educational practice is largely comprised of four dimensions. These are my aesthetics, ethics, ontology and the emerging educational knowledge. I have now used those notions of 'aesthetics', 'ethics', 'ontology' and 'educational knowledge' as dimensions through which I am authentically able to represent my educational development and living educational theory in this thesis. I have focused my explanations through these four dimensions in the Epilogues. Thus in Part One the Epilogue is entitled 'My Aesthetics: A Question of Balance'; in Part Two the Epilogue is called 'My Ethics: A Question of Responsibility, Meaning and Awe'; the Epilogue to Part Three is headed 'My Ontology: A Question of Perspective'; and in Part Four the Epilogue is entitled 'My Educational Knowledge'. My aesthetic, ethical and ontological values have only emerged in the course of my educational practice over time (see the **First** Section of this Introduction and **5.3.3.**) as I try to understand the significance of what it is I am doing in the name of education. Therefore I am able to show the stage of my own educational development which each Part of this thesis represents in terms of my aesthetic, ethical and ontological values as I try to explain what it is I know about my educational practice. And what I know is largely the results of my attempts to improve the quality of learning through the development of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships.

Seventh: Original Claims to Educational Knowledge: an Aesthetic Appreciation

I would now like to go back to the three original claims to knowledge which this thesis is putting forward in order to consolidate the writing in this

Introduction so far through an aesthetic perspective which, I hope, will unify the analytical parts into an organic and meaningful whole.

To remind you, here are the three original claims to educational knowledge:

1) The development of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships has educational use-value in judging the quality of my educational practice;

2) The analysis of my own fiction is an ontological guide to my effectiveness in turning my educational values into action;

3) I am developing my own living educational theory through a synthesis of my ontological, aesthetic and ethical concerns.

I have attempted to write this thesis with attention to the beauty and clarity of my use of language in conveying educational meanings. I am saying that this thesis should be aesthetically pleasing. The unifying principle within the three claims I am making is the aesthetic significance of their representation and educational validity. However a problem arises when evaluating anything on aesthetic criteria (an idea I develop in Parts One and Two). As Gadamer (1975) says:

> *'the being of art cannot be determined as an object of an aesthetic*
> *awareness because, on the contrary,* **the aesthetic attitude is more than it**
> **knows of itself**'. (my emphasis, p.104)

Åhlberg (1994), for example, says in relation to discussions about aesthetic qualities in music, that music itself gives him:

> *'far less trouble than the philosophers of music.'*   (p.79)

To quote again from Diffey (1986) who says:

> *'The term 'aesthetic' is now taking on in general usage meanings and*
> *resonances which cannot be captured by restriction to that which*
> *pertains only to art and/or beauty.'* (p.65)

In this thesis it is sometimes difficult to analyse the various aspects of aesthetic experience when such an analysis is in danger of destroying the unity which is at the heart of aesthetic experience. I like, by the way, the manner in which Foshay (1995) characterises the aesthetic:

> *'1) What <u>kind</u> of work is this? (Do I admire this kind?)*
> *2) What is its form? (How do the elements fit together?)*
> *3) How do I sense it? (What is its appeal?)*
> *4) What does it express? (What is its aesthetic truth, its impact?)'* (p.199)

In a recent article he writes this:

> *'[something] is aesthetically sound in the sense that its form, content,*
> *style and structure fit one another exceptionally well, and that its*
> *substance is worth serious attention.'* (Foshay, 1996:9)

In the thesis you are about to read, I take pains to try to focus form, content, style and structure in my educational life into a coherent whole whose substance is worth serious consideration.

Gadamer (1975) is also helpful in this area of the aesthetic when he clarifies what he means by a work of art:

'it [a work of art] belongs so closely to that which it is related that it

enriches its being as if through a new event of being.' (p.130)

I believe that my thesis should be judged as a work of art in the sense that it relays meanings in appropriate and engaging ways and can be judged using aesthetic criteria. In reading each of my three claims to educational knowledge I am asking you to bear Gadamer's, and now Bernstein's (1983) words in mind:

'It is not as if we are somehow detached or disinterested spectators

looking upon 'objects' and seeking to purify our aesthetic consciousness

by aesthetic differentiation. Rather there is a to-and-fro movement, a

type of participation characteristic of our involvement with works of

art.' (p.122)

Bernstein goes on to say:

'a work of art is essentially incomplete, in the sense that it requires an

interpreter. And the interpreter is not someone who is detached from   the

work of art, but someone upon whom the work of art makes a

claim.' (p.123)

Part Four stands apart from the rest of the thesis in some ways, in the sense that it is concerned both with concluding the account of my educational development, as well as evaluating the learning which has gone on throughout the thesis.

However, the text is unified through several devices. One of those is through the inclusion of Prefaces and Epilogues which act as descriptions and

explanations of each Part. Another, as I have mentioned, is through the inclusion in this resubmission of extracts of Coleridge's poem 'The Ancient Mariner'. You have already encountered it in its fullest form in The General Prologue. There I wove the story, symbolism, ethics and the theory of my own existence, my ontology, into the description and explanation of the lessons I spent helping my girls to improve their understanding of English through the exploration of the poem and its values. A deeper layer, and the one most significant to this thesis - my own living educational theory as an accounting to you of my own educational development - is in my own identification with the values underpinning the poem in my own life and educational development and how an exploration of the poem in action with the girls enables me to improve my practice. Because of the poem's ability to tap into my own ontological and ethical concerns, in a thesis concerned with accounting for such connections in a bid to improve my practice, its inclusion here is both relevant and aesthetically sound.

In this thesis I am contending that my claims to educational knowledge and their representation are open to validation in all the ways explained in this Introduction and that they are partly dependent upon your willingness to empathise with the values underpinning the descriptions and explanations put forward.

I am also maintaining that these three claims can be structured and altered through the ways in which they are represented (an idea which is at the heart of Eisner's thinking). I believe that an appreciation of this thesis is practicable if I am able to show the links between my claims to educational knowledge, the methods of validation and the standards of judgement brought to bear on those claims.

Because of my orientation to the standards of judgement I wish to be applied to my practice, I find Winter's (1989) six principles of rigour mostly appropriate as they offer broad and open guidelines to an explanation of the connection between principles, action and analysis within an action research account. Although I am happy for this thesis to be partly judged using these standards, I would still want to add an aesthetic principle. I believe it is not enough to fulfil all of these six principles of rigour, if at the end of this account I do not feel satisfied that the work has accorded to my own developmental standards of judgement in a manner convincing to myself. I term this principle an aesthetic one because, as I demonstrate throughout the thesis, one kind of aesthetic response is an holistic one which affirms the value of a piece of work. I believe with Kivy (1988) that my aesthetic response is a deeply personal one, which can bring me close to an identification with the values I bring with me to anything I write. I would want to be able to look back at this thesis and feel, essentially, 'Yes! That's what I wanted to say!' And it is in that spirit that this same educational standard of judgement was the one which I used as a basis in my work with my Year Nine English group, 1995, as I helped them to articulate their own educational standards of judgement as a bid to improve the quality of their work in English.

By learning what it means to apply the aesthetic as a standard of judgement in my own work in education, I am able to highlight the links I am making in my practice between the knowledge, the ethics, and my ontology in such a way as to create my own living educational theory from a story of my own educational development.

However, in the end, my educational life is full of individuals like Claire, Lizzie and Sarah in last year's Year Nine or Rebecca and Zoë in Year Seven this year. Writing this text has enabled me to come closer to understanding

how I might improve the work that I do with them and others in order to help them lead a more fulfilling life. Writing this text and the research which has gone into it have revealed how important it is for me to ask educational questions with students and pupils and then to try to find ways of putting our ideas into action in order to improve what it is we are doing. Going public in this text and in related papers (Laidlaw, 1994b, 1994c, 1995a&b; Laidlaw and Whitehead, 1995) has ensured that I attempt to account for my actions, I try to improve the quality of what I am doing and I am not satisfied until I have tested the options which my research highlights. This research embodies one form of my commitment to the educational development of myself and others and represents my own living educational theory. It is a tale of suffering and joy, of despair and hope. I hope you will be able to identify with the tale I am about to recreate here. For like the Mariner at the end of his long and arduous journey, I can now say with delight:

'Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?'