

# *I Came Into This With Nothing To Write About*

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DAVID W. JARDINE  
University of Calgary

CATALINA BAEZA HIDALGO  
Capilano University

KEN PULEY

DAVID G. SMITH  
University of Alberta

*This is a collection of various solo and co-written bits and pieces all variously focusing old age and its lived-experiences, the arts of writing, the idea of "the whole" in the language of some writing on ecologically alert education, early childhood education, attention to particulars, encouraging students new to the fields of education and the teaching and learning that ensues, an old book read over 50 years ago (!) and ecological pedagogy.*

*Meeting Cancelled*  
Meeting cancelled, a quick  
steal of five minutes to write  
down some words and let the  
just energy of it  
work.

Just to stop  
Here, with nothing  
In mind.

Found that the energy can flow in this spot even though I came into this with  
nothing to write about.

Just wanted to come here. Breath still flows unsinging.  
Stop.  
This empty spot flows.  
Half a nothing's breath.  
Done.  
(D.J.)

## Introduction

This collection of related writings came together in a great and sudden swirl, as you will see below. I (D.J.) had been writing various solo and co-written bits and pieces about, it seemed, various different topics—old age and its lived-experiences, the arts of writing, the idea of "the whole" in the language of some writing on ecologically alert education, early childhood education, attention to particulars, encouraging students new to the fields of education and the teaching and learning that ensues, an old book read over 50 years ago (!) and, shall we say, ecological pedagogy. Emails back and forth between my co-authors all still abuzz.

Then, as sometime happens, things coalesce seemingly of themselves, a sort of sudden "Oh, wait, this is that!" There is a topic here, a topography for all these particulars, and then a quick journal notes to myself:

*January 10, 2026:* Been writing about, well, writing, composing, the dance of composing myself over the composition of some topic (Tsong-kha-pa, 2000, p. 111<sup>1</sup>), some topography to be written "about." An open area of "encounter" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 489; Smith, 2020, p. 204), of there being an "in between."<sup>2</sup> Experiencing there being an open space, a sort of "locale" in which to write. Goofy Heideggerianisms—"there-Being" (Heidegger, 1962) open space. *Dasein*. Open. Spaces where an encounter can occur.

Such is the jumble of thought and exclamation sometimes and how, as I proceeded, other separately saved documents were drawn into the same orbit. Such is the work of writing, of composing, and of having this old, rich soil-bank of ideas, dream-words that float by at the slightest summons in a weirdly open space. But then when the coalescence starts, the lovely hard work also starts in that very spot (see the asides with Ken Puley below):

It's like making a path through the forest. At first, it's rough going, with a lot of obstructions, but returning to it again and again, we clear the way. After a while the ground becomes firm and smooth from being walked on repeatedly. Then we have a good path for walking in the forest. (Chah, 2005, p. 83)

In this paper, I decided to let some of this show, this rough going of finding one's way and how, once the open spot looms, visitors arrive. Informal back-and-forth of emails, one piece of writing interjected into another, and good old fashion scholarly citation seeking, all together.

### "The Nothing Which We Scarcely Know"

And yet—beyond what it, not away from it but before it, there is still something else that happens. In the midst of being as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing, a lighting. Thought of in reference to what is, to beings, this clearing *is* in a greater degree than are beings. This open center is therefore not surrounded by what is; rather, the lighting center itself encircles all that is, like the Nothing which we scarcely know. That which is can only be, as a being, if it stands within and stands out within what is lighted in this clearing. Only these clearing grants and guarantees to us humans a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are. Thanks to this clearing beings, are unconcealed in certain changing

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<sup>1</sup> As often happens, "informal" bits of writing can contain referentialities that are not made explicit but just alluded to. I will be inserting references as I find them to give readers pathways to follow should they feel inclined to do so.

<sup>2</sup> Original quotation: "*The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between*" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 295).

degrees. And yet a being can be *concealed*, too, only within the sphere of what is lighted. Each being we encounter and which encounters us keeps to this curious opposition of presence... and concealedness. (Heidegger, 1971, p. 53)

Ever since first reading, in English, Martin Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1971), the image of "a clearing" has occasionally come to mind as almost applicable to experiences, writings, circumstances, and so on. It is an idea whose opacity and clarity and headiness was part of its power to a then 21-year-old undergraduate in Philosophy. I'd spent the summer of 1970 also lazing my way through *Being and Time* (1962) with markers in hand, again, not understanding much but certainly fully abuzz and wanting to stay with it even if I didn't quite "get it."

That passage cited above from the "Origin" essay is an example of that of which it speaks. It is a summoning up of a whole world of images and ideas and provocations and pathways. Heidegger suggests that we ourselves, we humans, are beings who do not just live enmeshed in the thickets and of things. We can come upon "a clearing" in all that, a sense of openness and possibility. We experience ourselves, shall we say, stepped back from one-thing-after-another meshed-ness in a way that we can experience this very meshed-ness itself, articulate it, see it, witness it and its relatedness which does not especially appear in the course of everyday life. We can, in this small way, free ourselves from it in order to be able to free ourselves for considering it, not just living it out. Consideration—wonderful out word that invokes being out under the stars.

We can become aware of the smell of the forest fire smoke, we can think about its causes, we can search out information, we can still our panic and think it through, we can discuss all this with our fellow human beings, we can act or fall back into forgetting about it. We can watch the dogs become wary of going outside into the smell. We can, just like that sentence, note that in writing it down, sketching it, remembering it. I can imagine a painting made with more skilled hands than mine depicting that wariness of theirs.

This sort of open spot, of course, is a place that requires great patience, carefulness, lest it run amok over its own exhilarations or collapse under the weighty summons of one more thing to get done. I suggest that the very freedom we have to experience this spaciousness is the locale in which we can deeply err. We can stop being *considerate* and can just get caught up in the swirling of it, the stimulation simulations of it.

This caution becomes more obvious if we look at the language that Hans-Georg Gadamer uses in this regard. "To keep oneself so free from what one encounters in the world that one can present it to oneself *as it is*" (1989, p. 443) instead of garbled through my own intimate loves and foibles. But to be free of it does not mean that the forest fire smoke is now just an object of our amusement because once we become considerate, the thing, the relations, that emerge in the open space start to show themselves and ourselves, if we are patient and practiced enough.

It can also present my own foibled attachments *themselves* as well. We humans can write and think and paint, and many other arts, in ways that stop short our sleepiness and sharply *present it to ourselves*. But we can equally get all a'panic in the almost stroboscopic inundation of online flickerings that can easily arise and sweep us away. A phrase that Gadamer (in translation) uses that is shuddering to hear in these ecological desperate times is "*freedom from the environment*" (p. 444). I see the Raven come by the bird feeder with blood on its beak and I call to mind the deer in ditches nearby and the hording feasters of them and magpies and once a Bald Eagle pulling up an entrail as I drove by. And the deaths and the cars and the hurriednesses to get somewhere else. The arriving Raven comes encircled with this strange "light"-ness that makes possible a type of encounter that is aware of our enmeshedness in the earthly ways of things *and can consciously parse it out, follow its threads, compose something about it*. I called this elsewhere "a radiant being" encircled, *a la* Buddhist mandalas, with all their relations (Jardine, 2016). This is simpler than it might first sound—in a young child's copying the letters of their name, struggling with pencils and shapes and orders till suddenly a name appears is a cluster of revealed and concealed relations that is age old and brand new all at the same time.

This clearing, this space, has a freedom to it that is precisely that freedom that allows humans to degrade those very relations, to despoil the conditions under which our lives and the lives of Ravens might remain hale and healthy and, well, "whole" (see the discussion with Catalina below).

Our relation to this experience of clearing and the freedoms and run-amok dangers it allows is thus at issue in this paper in various ways. What writers do, and teachers do, one way or the other, is have troves of experience and examples to draw upon to help shape and form and compose themselves in the face of this opening up of possibilities and concealments. What writers and teachers have is experience in inviting the new, the young, the student, into this open space in a living field of knowledge and experience in helping students bring themselves to this place and compose themselves as they proceed in exploring the composition of the living space itself. Hans-Georg Gadamer talks of *energeia*, of the energy of such encounters in such living spaces. Teachers feel this revealing and concealing giddiness each September when new classes start. Teachers feel this revealing and concealing giddiness each September when new classes start.

What follows are back-and-forth conversations with co-writers and we circle around this topic in various ways.

### **There is No Whole. Just Fields... Relations... (Catalina Baeza Hidalgo & David W. Jardine)**

[The world] compels over and over, and the better one knows it, the *more* compelling it is. This is not a matter of mastering an area of study" (Gadamer, 2007, p. 115).

**DJ:** An elaborated email back-and-forth. Catalina is an Early Childhood Education instructor. We [with D.J.] have written before (Baeza Hidalgo & Jardine, 2025, under consideration).

**CBH:** Hi David, I hope your winter is going well. Here I am, with my questions. Which, as always, are just excuses to connect with you and walk through unpredictable trajectories.

I am teaching a course that is coming into being and I find myself with a question about ideas and wholeness. I wonder what your thoughts are. How can you keep ideas whole? How do you really pay attention to the encounter of yourself, the child, the crack on the pavement? Emergence, curriculum, I find it is always abundant and relational when attending to interjections, moment where it is never about the child, or the material, or ourselves.

**DWJ:** We live on an old road that has a crack from one side to the other, betraying a drainage pipe underneath from one field to another. My grandsons and I walk this road and stop by this crack every time we walk, looking for it, not wanting to miss it. It has become a noticeable "rest spot" in our walks—not that we need a rest (it's not that far) but a moment to collect ourselves and notice it each time. It is in the middle of a spacious field and sometimes, when it is windy, we listen to the far-surround of trees that encircle us. Sometimes we go to each end of the pipe to check for water flow and such. In the summer, there is the enticing green-scum smell of standing water and surface bugs and frogs that stop singing when we approach. And in all this, it is not a big deal but a little one. It is in the place where ravens catch winds from the west and hover over heads. Going "there" with a 4 ½- and 2 ½-year-old just by itself gives me an allowance to let that space open up around me, to speak and to fall silent and listen and ask and still ourselves. An old practice from teaching student-teachers. An old recollection of how many of them thought it was slightly nutty at first, of course.

How do you maintain attention, then? Partly, letting the object of attention settle you into its being present at all. *There is it*—all of it, all of its ways, and history and location, the fields, the trees, the wind the drainage, the beautiful scum. Of course, we will bottle up a bit and phone someone to come and talk to us about it in our classroom. Of course.

It is an amazing list because in teaching ECE, you'll recognize it right away, on how to maintain yourself there—speaking, listening, touching, reading, listening, writing, painting, drawing, gathering, sharing. these are acts of "staying with" something and letting (the continuity of) attention and devotion

(Berry, 1986, p. 32) develop—me writing these very sentences to you reminds me of some writing I was doing this morning and reminds me to return to it. The space where reminding can happen. A path gets formed (Chah 2005, p. 83) over these creative attention-cultivators (writing, speaking...).

The path will then invite you to return to it.... to follow it—the path itself has a beckoning to it. (See emails below with Ken Puley.)

Here's a citation you and I have considered before (Baeza Hidalgo & Jardine, 2025). I'm quoting again because, well, I tend to forget (another reason I write!):

This is one of the secrets of ecological mindfulness. To understand what is right in front of us in an ecologically sane, integrated way is to somehow see this particular thing in place, located in a patterned nest of interdependencies without which it would not be what it is. Differently put, "understanding 'the whole'" involves paying attention to this "in its wholeness." This rootedness in the particular is what helps prevent ecology from becoming woozy and amorphous—a disembodied idea that misses the particularities in the flit of this Ruby-Crowned Kinglet pair in the lower pine branches and how this movement is so fitting here, in the coming arch of spring in the Rocky Mountain foothills. (Jardine, 2016, p. 48)

**CBH:** So, this notion of "wholeness," the whole of ideas, etc. is something of a dead end. There is no whole. Just fields... relations...

**DWJ:** It is language that trips us up here, I think. The whole space of relations isn't a thing among all the others...it is *how* every thing exists.

You can understand the particular thing in the field "in its wholeness" which means, "in its fieldness"—the plant *is* the water and the time to sprout and the sun and the air and the soil and the tending and the growing and the yielding and our eating and composting which needs sun and rain and time and patience. We can do this sort of unfurling with *everything* and each thing will eventually lead us to all things but letting *that* insight take the lead can lead to simply floating away (recall Heidegger says that the clearing is "beyond what is" but "not away from it." This is, I suggest, in line with his phenomenological training. As suggested below, this "beyond what is" can be an empty space of meditative stillness—similar to what happened when the meeting was cancelled). Nothing is a thing separate from the field of relations it inhabits. *This* is its "wholeness" because every thing in every field fields all the other fields eventually. This sounds rather psychedelic but is in fact also an ecological insight and a pedagogical one, too. Teachers have inherited *living fields of knowledge* and also the age-old task of introducing the young into an old world that needs their regenerative attention (see Arendt, 1969).

Folks like Nishitani Keiji (who studied with Martin Heidegger) say that this wholeness applies to every thing:

*The center is everywhere.* Each and every thing becomes the center of all things and, in that sense, becomes an absolute center. This is the absolute uniqueness of things, their reality. (Nishitani, 1982, p. 146)

All things in the world are linked together, one way or the other. Not a single thing comes into being without some relationship to every other thing. (Nishitani, 1982, p. 149).

Even a similar sentiment from Gadamer:

*Everything* points to some other thing. ["everything is dependent on something else, and because that in turn is dependent, it is not autonomous" (Tsong-kha-pa, 2004, p. 162)]. Nothing comes forward just in the one meaning that is offered to us. Only because the universal relatedness of being is concealed from the human eye does it need to be discovered. (Gadamer, 2007, p. 131)

My grandsons and I are starting to plant seeds inside for garden seedlings. Seeds, soil, water, light, carefulness, planning ahead. Our waiting for the seeds to sprout is an old act, some say a virtue, full of more stories than one could ever read. Any point in this array *is* all its relations and ancestors and planting *this* seed can be a very brief moment of repose for us. We can rest in it for however fleeting a wee while (see Jardine, 2008 for a discussion of how time itself is experienced differently in these moments).

You won't find any of this new, I realize that... there is a whole, but we are only party to this whole as the whole *of something* (see Husserl, 1970, on the phenomenological intentionality of consciousness and his student, Martin Heidegger's interest (1962, 1971) in how Being is precisely *not an object among others* but that which allows space for beings and their considered encountering of one another to happen. This is different than my hand laying on the computer mouse even though, of course, that thing can have a clearing befall it and become appropriately myriad).

We're teachers. You and I see "this" again and again with different topics and different children and adults and we start to get the sense that "the whole" must be this "thing" separate from being "of something" because everywhere we look "it" recurs if we pay proper attention. But what recurs? The unfolding of any particular into a whole field of relations... we find in the seedlings that there are "proximal" relations—peas, soil, sun, earth, hands, planting, depth, seasons, waiting, grandchildren. And there are more distant ones—bamboo pea-stakes imported from China, smoke from wildfires in the Eastern Slopes. Or circles, straight lines, right-angled triangles, Pythagoras and his cult all kin in a living field of relations. I would often have student-teachers imagine standing in a field with, say, "commas" alongside them and ask them, "What else is nearby in this field if there are commas in this field?"

Where to stop this unfurling is then a practical matter of making something shapely and enticing for students in a class, or for my grandchildren to handle. Or for teachers in a graduate class to cultivate their own ability to think this way. Many are, at first and of course, simply overwhelmed by this experience, but practice with others nearby settles this down, as you know.

Of course, meditating on "the whole" empty of beings, is a central feature of many religious practices and is itself a particular pedagogy aimed at a very specialized journey that has its own ways, fields, ancestors, places, rituals, examples, etc.

### **Very Often It Is Rote, But Rote Is Better Than Not Doing It” and the Origins of “Meeting Cancelled” (David W. Jardine & Ken Puley)**

**Introduction (DWJ):** First a slightly embarrassing and utterly wonderful experience. I had a Zoom meeting that got canceled and was left sitting at my computer and I quite literally decided to open a word document in front of me with nothing else in mind. Usually something arrives fairly suddenly when I do this but this time, to use that lovely equivocal Buddhist-like phrase, "nothing arrived" but *the space itself* was experientially palpable. The experience lasted longer than I would have thought.

In the middle of that, of course, eventually, I decided to write about this very experience of the spaciousness of writing itself. "The space of writing itself" became "a thing" "in" the space of writing—I shall stop saying "so to speak" at this point. It is this experience that summoned all this other writing. This is where "Meeting Cancelled" above originated.

**K.P:** In the theatre that I did, the space is marked off and entered into deliberately, with a sort of mutual agreement. I do this with Yoga and other ritualized things... marking off the space, physically, or the time, with a slight singing bowl gong, or a candle lit. Interrupting everyday life. Very often it is rote, but rote is better than not doing it. Doing the gesture precisely and attentively even if it is rote is important. It can be a gate.

**DWJ:** Because even rote takes me to that locale itself even if I am not able, now, to properly practice what the space needs of me. "It" is experienced as dead and closed and thick and heavy and routine and mechanical, sometimes (this is why the "meeting cancelled" moment was so compelling and summoning—it was experienced as alive and open even though empty). This is a mutual matter in this

sense as well. Some days, very early morning, I don't have to come downstairs and get a white screen open before I start arriving here and *it starts arriving as well*. Those blessed open arms when it does. Waiting for my open arms.

**DWJ Aside:** "This does not mean that [we] leave [] [our] habitat but that [w] e ha[ve] another posture towards it—

a free, distanced orientation." (Gadamer, 1989, p. 445)

where we can enter the space of relations itself and write, speak, paint, stretch deliberately and well, perform, gesture, adore.

And also, that hidden thing about practice and constancy over a long stretch of living with it, returning to it. I've been writing for *decades*. This itself is hard to fathom.

**KP:** Here are a couple of quotes pertaining to movement in theatre exploration or yoga:  
From theatre director Jerzy Grotowski:

We are drifting then in the stream of reality, but our movement, even if full of energy, is in point of fact a repose... a movement which is repose... We have two aspects: movement and repose. When we are moving, and when we are able to break through the techniques of the body of everyday life, then our movement becomes a movement of perception. It can be practiced. [A]fter a few moments, if you are really attentive, something does change. We forget about this state through the years... It is necessary to re-find this hypothetical child and his "ecstasies," which, long ago, we "abdicated," as Baudelaire said, if I well remember. It is something tangible, organic, primal. (pp. 257-258)

### **DWJ: An Aside**

[In learning to experience events in this way], we experience an absolute opposition to [our] will-to-control ["the syndrome of grasping at a self-nature" (Tsongkhapa 2005, p. 182)], not in the sense of a rigid resistance to the presumption of our will which is bent on utilizing things, but in the sense of [having come upon] the superior and intrusive power of a being reposing in itself. (Gadamer, 1977, pp. 226-227).

**KP:** From yoga teacher Vanda Scaravelli (1991, p. 128): "In the beginning you have to make room for yoga in your daily life and give it the place it deserves. But after some time, yoga itself will pull you up by the hair and make you do it."

**DWJ:** Wonderful.

**KP:** I suspect that I was feeling dizzy because of feeling overwhelmed by the topsy-turviness of the world outside my little corner. And one of the dangers of all this chaos, apart from possible threats to our survival, is that it can eclipse this other work which is extremely important. Hannah Arendt wrote in the preface to her book *Men in Dark Times* (1968, p. ix): "...even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect some illumination, and that such illumination may well come less from theories and concepts than from the uncertain, flickering, and often weak light that some men and women, in their lives and their works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time span that was given them on earth."

And the practice of rote is important in that we don't always feel like engaging our "higher self," and we often need little rituals, and techniques (*techné*) that aid us in transition and opening.

And, as an aside, when I said I was feeling almost "normal," my present "normal" is less energetic than it was a year ago. I suppose that's what happens as we age, but all the more reason to work against time, so to speak. Opening used to be easy, now I have to "work/play" harder to kindle a bit of light.

**I'm Also Caught in the Idea Of... (David W. Jardine & David G. Smith)**

**DWJ**... you and I email corresponding on: The Pedagogical Miracles of Ache and Age. This year is forty years we've known each other. 1986. Spotting each other. Brothers to be.

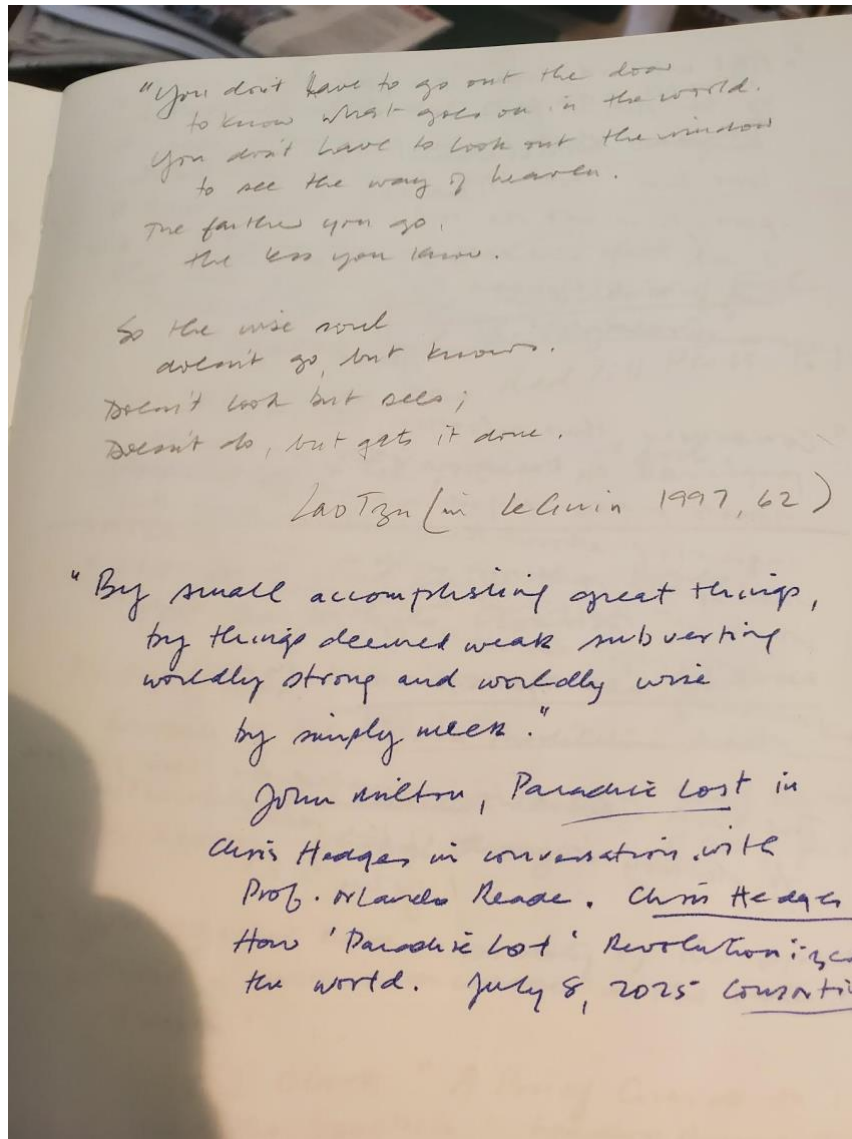
Somehow how that thing that has got loosened in both of us—the sweet miraculousness of such ordinary events and the breathtaking insight that their ordinariness is at once so rich and full of relations out into fields of unutterableness. But not elevated like that. In Penhold, aghast over the vines on the fence beside the railroad track. Right near laughing over the sun on it. Sober and high as kiteswings in its presence.

And that *that* experience is one you and I and many others have deliberately cultivated as a pedagogical practice—that is, it is the secret message of our teaching, that the world can be experience thus and thus, with practice. The glowing vines on the fence can become like a portend of the whole place, the tracks, the grain elevators, the sun and sky, our longstanding practice of encouraging each other over such things. It will embrace and support our ventures and care for them. and me, lately, knowing that it is the uplift as my body slowly droops and aches. And that we have cultivated companionships in this spot—friends, colleagues, students, teachers, but also authors and other ancients who remind us that we are lovely, harmless old coots and not just nuts. And we have a shared secret that can change lives.

There is healing here—and a certain embrace of suffering, too. Apologies... it is one of those mornings where the grace is pouring down all around me.

**Figure 1**

*Journal Entry, David G. Smith.*



"You don't have to go out the door  
to know what goes on in the world.  
You don't have to look out the window  
to see the way of heaven.  
The farther you go,  
the less you know.

So the wise soul  
doesn't go, but knows.  
Doesn't look but sees;  
Doesn't do, but gets it done.

Lao Tzu (in LeGuin 1997, 62)

"By small accomplishing great things,  
by things deemed weak subverting  
worldly strong and worldly wise  
by simply means."

John Milton, Paradise Lost in  
Chris Hedges in conversation with  
Prof. Orlando Read. Chris Hedges  
How 'Paradise Lost' Revolutionized  
the world. July 8, 2025 Conversation

You don't have to go out the door  
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Doesn't do, but gets it done.

Lao Tzu  
(in LeGuin 1997, p. 62)

By small, accomplishing great things,  
 By things deemed weak subverting  
 Worldly strong and worldly wise  
 By simply meek.

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*  
 (in Hedges, n.p.)

**DWJ:** Written out by hand. That by itself is an old cascade, with grandkid now scrawling his name by hand. Sigh... how long ago did I read Lao Tzu? and also, a lyric by George Harrison in very early 1968, a Beatles song called "The Inner Light"—"without going out of my door, I can know all things on Earth..." (The Beatles, 2020). Coming up to fifty-eight years ago and reading it again now, listening again. Well, I was not quite 18 (flip side of The Beatles "Lady Madonna" single, March 2, 1968) at the time, not yet in university flunking out first year. Only found out recently that an old translation of Lao Tzu included the phrase "the 10 000 things" because it included the Greek word myriad. Never too old to trip over you own feet all over again!

I want you to send a one-page thing from yesterday. Funny having experiences simply bowl me over and then sit still right in front of me and ask me to simply stay put:

.....

***An Ode to Hermeneutic Incidence and Hermeneutic Writing***

*My fingers are failing me  
 How the words used to whisk away ahead, miles and miles.  
 How lights would light up. I've lost incidence.*

*Me and the two grandkids, 2 and 4, watching an odd, soothing video of a mother cat and kitten doing what one would expect – picking radishes and taking them to market. Making beet and shrimp soup. Out for a walk. Market money spent on a two-wheeler. Broken. Hospital visit. Kitten and bike all fixed up. All with little change in pitch or tenor or tempo. The music stays simple and acoustic and comforting. Organ, clarinet, acoustic guitar. Repeating. Repeating. The website has dozens of these.<sup>3</sup>*

*The two boys seem calmed, charmed. Spellbound even.  
 The hermeneut in me becomes lovingly suspicious over sentimentality.  
 Sirens, but something in me watching is spelled as well.  
 That this spell-boundedness might be healing or at least not ravaging like the racket of Lego cops and robbers and siren and chases and crashes and the like.*

*Then this.  
 The four-year-old grandson picks up last year's class picture, smiles, and faces it towards the cat screen. He lifts it up and two-handed holds it just above his eyes. No words. Smiling. As calm as the video seems to be. Then held upright on the table in front of him, facing. Smiling. Lasts and lasts—maybe fifteen minutes? Maybe more. Him wordless, soundless, beaming – and me too. A feat for both of us. His younger brother is simply rapt beside him. I said out loud the day before that I'm no longer writing lately and that the world had seemed to lose its incidence. When writing works, the open pours of small events have rivers in them, over-streaming in their relations. When incidence works, I want to write as a way to love these relations and gather them and compose myself and them in one gesture.*

*So now, here I am, with this very odd, very beautiful and simple incident that seems so complex. A calm that I've been blankly agitated over since. What is he doing? There is an affection and serenity here that I can't decode. I knew enough as a former ECE teacher to not say or ask much. "Are you showing them?"  
 "Yes."*

*So now I've got this gap of incidence whose fulness I cannot but adore. I know it is more and somehow beautiful and telling and my words cannot tell what the tell is.*

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/@MeowMamas8668/videos>

...

**DGS:** The funny thing is I've been reflecting lately on how, even while a year from age 80, I haven't changed a bit over the course of my life. I'm exactly the same person I was at the first peek of self-consciousness at age 2. I think this points to the meaning of another Greek word for "life," *psyche*, usually translated as "soul," but also means one's essential character or personality in the deep sense of givenness, that is eternal and indestructible. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." Of course along the way there are endless distractions and pulls that can be harmful and distorting and exaggerating, and the real work is always to get behind these smokes to constantly recover one's true soul/character which, of its own essential nature is always "good" since it is precisely that which participates harmoniously in the unfolding of life in its zoetic reality.

I think I've always been a "meditator," and that's why I was always lousy at school. I was simply too busy looking intently, with great concentration, at each teacher, watching ever gesture, listening to every vocal cadence, all with the greatest wondering of what this was/is all about. Quadratic equations? All superfluous to my adolescent minding.

**DWJ:** A meditator, aka "daydreaming" or other public-school insults. Funny how it was demeaned, but not really much of a surprise, I guess. A lot of both of our work has been to do the Hermes trick right here—tickle the ribs of the sleepinesses.

I've written paeans to teachers who spotted this in me and let it fly (Jardine, 2012, 2016) but I guess both of us are constantly doing that by writing of Mencius and Lao Tzu and citing Gadamer and whomever else. Thanksgivings. Remembrances. Ritual returns. It is not just scholarly citatiousness (though it is partly that—showing the paths). It is almost as if the "space" itself had opened up in me much younger than I expected or could formulate or give adequate notice to, or some readiness that is still being graced by, e.g., having this sort of conversation with you still after all these years... It would have been the summer of 1964 when this arose explicitly for me. I was ready for the feeling of living alongside what folks felt the world to be...something is going on, *Sich abspielt*—old Gadamer thing (Gadamer, 1989, p. 104), something is playing itself out all around me... but asthma as a three-year-old also gave me a cloister to sit calmly within if I was able. Pushed others back who didn't want to set anything off in me. So glad of it in retrospect. Yes. Something feels exactly the same and I must add that now, at 75 and a half, I feel more able than ever to rest into it overwhelms. Enjoy its aches and pains.

And aside, that still,  
the vivid experience of [eventually] writing  
*Meeting Cancelled*  
was the most vivid of my life *and*  
It made me realize, slowly, since,  
that it is *also* an old, warm habitat of mine

**DGS:** In the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas, Jesus says "Everything you need to know is always right in front of your face."

**DWJ:** Your elaborations help me understand why I didn't want to do any of the Early Childhood Education elaboration of that incident with Atherton and his class photo and showing his class picture to the calm space of that video. It seemed perfectly adequate to itself, like him going down the road from his house, wanting to thank a family that does spectacular Hallowe'en decorations. It be perfect, right in front of my face. I could blab forever about social relations and giving thanks and a four-year-old wanting his father to come with him down the street to thank a neighbour, and on and on. but, well, nope! Hermeneutically already perfect. Also watching another rather calm video Little Bear video of a pretend "Monster Bear" and feeling my 2 ½ year old trembling on my lap and a-pout and near tears and doing all the hugs and embraces and reassurances and talking him through it and me, too, shaken a bit by his

shaking. The quiet telling of even that telling anecdote and the warm aura of sharing it and bathing in it... enough already once its radiances begin to show.

### “An in the End” D.J.

**Figure 2**

*Companions.*



A brief little note on companionships. It took me 75 years to finally check out this word on Online Etymology Dictionary<sup>4</sup>. As very often happens with etymologies, things sometimes hide something in plain sight—with this forewarning: "even when etymologies are right, they are not proofs but achievements preparatory to... analysis" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 103).

Breaking bread (Latin *panis*) together (Latin *com-*). My love to all the old citations that showed up and their lovely authors.

My thanks to the boys' and their two blueberry-stained companion bears. And to Catalina, Ken, and David for the words and patience, waiting for pea plants to sprout.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/>

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