Thinking and learning are based on powerful concepts – ideas that identify, but also provoke and challenge. This collection is designed to ignite discussions among educators and learners at all levels about social studies concepts that generate curiosity, passion, and a sense of who we are and could be in this world. Contributors to this book, drawn from across the educational field, have focused on five selected concepts: democracy, diversity, ecological/environmental justice, multiculturalism, and social justice, unpacking and repacking each concept in powerful ways to exemplify their generative possibilities. Each author contextualizes their understandings within the broader philosophical, theoretical, and educational discourse, and explores these concepts from their unique perspective and through their multiple lenses. This collection seeks not to provide answers, but to invite readers into an ongoing dialogue about ideas that help us create meaning in the world.
Educator to Educator
Educator to Educator

Unpacking and Repacking Generative Concepts in Social Studies

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INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, we attended a national conference to present a paper on the conceptualization of democracy in Canadian social studies curriculum documents. After presenting, we were sitting in a nearby cafeteria debriefing about how we thought our paper had been received. In the course of our discussion, which by the way always goes back and forth in rapid fire—ideas flying one atop the other, bobbing and weaving, swooping and soaring about—one or the other of us said, “We should really put all of this in a book,” to which the other naively said, “Yes we really should.” Little did we know at that moment we were setting in motion an undertaking that would not only impact our personal and professional lives, but also transform our thinking about concepts we thought we knew so well.

Over the next few months we discussed the idea of a book. What will it be about? What should be the focus? Very quickly we agreed that the book had to be about concepts relevant to social studies education. We had been exploring how various concepts are officially manifested within curriculum documents for some time, so this book project seemed like a natural extension of our ongoing work. But with so many concepts relevant to social studies education, it was very difficult to choose which ones should serve as the focus. Drawing on our personal interests, our research foci, and many, many, telephone discussions, we settled on five concepts: democracy, multiculturalism, social justice, diversity, and ecological or environmental justice.

We then asked, “How shall we frame the book?” We wanted something that would capture the joy and effortless give-and-take of our personal conversations, telephone calls from Saskatchewan to Ontario and back again, in which we wiled away hours talking about ideas and how they might impact education. We also wanted to do something different, something imaginative, creative, personal; something with a touch of the whimsical here and there. It was important that our work be substantive and useful to other educators, but we also wanted it to be unlike a typical textbook or academic paper. We decided the book would be framed as a personal exploration of our thinking about the five concepts mentioned above and at the same time, as a conversation with and between social studies educators that had the potential to continue into the future—educator to educator. In short, we wanted to incite or contribute to ongoing discussions, rather than have the last word. But we knew we needed a little more flesh on the bone to make this work. Because one of the points that frequently came up in our personal conversations was the need to make students’ learning meaningful, to make learning generative, we decided to make that
our starting point, and we sought out other conceptions of 'generative knowledge'.

We found David Perkins (1992) *Smart Schools: Better Thinking and Learning for Every Child* to be an excellent resource.

Perkins (1992) asserts that the goal of education is to engage students with “knowledge that does not just sit there but functions richly in people’s lives to help them understand and deal with the world” (p. 5). Focusing on this goal, we decided our exploration of concepts and our contributions to a conversation about social studies education had to be about the ways knowledge can be made generative for students and for us as educators as we build and improve upon our understandings and practice.

At this point, we reflected, “Should we write the book ourselves or include others? If we do include others, whom should we ask to contribute?” Because we know that people think about and engage with these concepts in very different ways, it seemed obvious that for the book to serve as a contribution to conversations, we needed a variety of perspectives included. Both of us wanted a variety of voices from the broad field of education: teachers, academics, graduate students, and parents. We also knew our consideration of contributors needed to be sensitive to gender, cultural background, sexuality, geographic location, and other aspects of identity that inform how we understand these concepts and how we view the worlds in which they are made meaningful. Ultimately, in addition to the two of us, contributors include Dr. Kurt Clausen, a university professor working in North Bay, Ontario; Margaret Epp and Kim Beaulieu, teachers with the local school board in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; and Robyn Liu Hopson, a recent PhD graduate and college instructor in Toronto, Ontario.

The book itself is divided into five sections (one section for each concept), with each section comprised of four chapters. The following is an overview of each section and its contributing chapters.

### PART 1 – ECOLOGICAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

In the first chapter, *A Case for Appeal*, Clausen begins with the suggestion that we return to the Bible to understand Western civilization’s problematic relationship with the natural world, specifically the enduring belief that humanity is at once different from and superior to other living creatures and plants on the Earth. However, he purports that humans have misinterpreted biblical passages, erroneously believing *dominion over* means *ownership of*. In a creative twist, he puts forward a “legal” case for ecological justice, *Regna Plantae & Animalia* (sans *homo sapiens sapiens*) *v Regnum Animalia* (*homo sapiens sapiens*), claiming that humankind has broken the Biblical contract. Artfully argued, Clausen considers the status of the respondents in the world (humankind) through an exploration of the historical meanings of ownership, its parallels with absolute monarchy, and the need for humanity to act more like a *prudent parent* than overlord. He asks if the respondents are *infit guardians* of the world, using analogies of physical abuse, negligence, sexual abuse,
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substance abuse, and mental incompetence of parents on the health of the child (ecology). The conclusion outlines a list of appellant demands based on the need to rebalance the relationship in more just ways.

Lemisko pens an insightful second chapter, *We Are Not Strangers Here...* based on notions that the Earth has *rights* and that no part of the earthly community “can be guided in its activities except with reference to the total community” (Berry, 2003, p. 3). Lemisko claims we as human beings have forgotten our connectedness with the Earth due to the widespread influence of Western or Euro-centric ways of thinking. Almost instinctively she asks: *How can we remember and how can we educated to remember?* Drawing on her Collingwoodian roots, Lemisko engages in a *coming to know* exercise that encourages the asking of questions of our presuppositions about relationship with the Earth, tackling the unacknowledged/taken-for-granted underpinnings of contemporary ideologies that impact our world. She asserts that ecological justice, if it is to be had, involves teachers opening themselves and their students up to multiple ways of knowing and learning—to participate in experiential learning that uses the mind, body, and heart. It also involves going out into the world, visiting local ecosystems and engaging with the soil, plants, and animals. In short, we have to ‘educate to remember’ that we are not strangers here.

In the next chapter, Horton takes a different turn, directing his attention towards environmental justice. *Where in the World Is the Justice?* begins with a recollection of a class where the teacher is facilitating an exploration of the concept *environment*. The chapter easily flows into a history of the related concepts of *environmentalism*, noting the evolving nature of caring for and preservation of the environment, and *environmental justice* with its focus on how people are treated relative to the benefits offered and the challenges faced by the environment. He includes ideas for teachers to consider as they help students create generative knowledge about these concepts.

Finally, in Chapter Four, Epp considers environmental sustainability and ecological justice in a chapter called *Developing a Disposition Towards the Natural Environment in Early Childhood Classrooms*. After more than 25 years in the classroom, she is called to ponder how children’s early experiences with the natural world help to create an appreciation for nature and a disposition of wonder and caring for the environment that will last throughout their lives. Using poetry, photographs, and personal recollections, she weaves a tapestry of meaningful relations with the natural environment while integrating relevant research, educational books, and other resources available to teachers who want to inspire generative engagement in the next generation of environmentally conscious people.

PART 2 – DIVERSITY

In a chapter entitled *Interweaving Differences*, Lemisko defines *diversity* as the differences among and between human beings with a particular focus on individual
characteristics such as personality, physical characteristics, age, sexuality, gender, race, class, ableness, skills, capacities, and interests. Recognizing that each individual encompasses multiple identities that are constructed at the intersection of these characteristics, she suggests that diversity can be made generative as one explores such complexity. Though educators have historically focused on diversity by noting difference from X, Lemisko claims that we are actually all the same, as no person is anything other than different from everyone else. Drawing parallels with bio-diversity, she asserts that individual differences between and among people enhances the resilience of human communities. By “bridging differences,” a process that involves seeing differences, seeking contextualized understanding of differences, and examining one’s own identity statuses and social location in relationship to differences, teachers are better positioned to help learners “live multiculturalism.”

Epp considers what it means to be ‘living diversity’ in the second chapter: Diversity Creates Dimension. Using her experiences as a classroom teacher, she shares her belief in the following: the need to cultivate a culture of respect, what it means for students to engage in respectful talk, the need to incorporate a variety of resources into one’s teaching, and how each of these factors contribute to the exploration of diverse perspectives and points-of-view. Through reading, writing, and discussion activities designed with an eye to students’ diverse interests and abilities, Epp outlines her views on what it means to learn about diversity.

Horton attempts to get at the core essence of diversity in the chapter, A World of Difference. Asking, What is diversity? he explores the etymology of the word and its basis in the notion of difference. Suggesting that even young students have a basic understanding of difference, evident from their growing ability to categorize objects based on particular attributes, Horton believes that this understanding can in turn be used to scaffold to a more complex comprehension of diversity in the world. With a focus on various aspects of identity and personhood, Horton asserts the need to encourage the embracing of diversity as a matter of course when living in pluralistic societies. However, living in a diverse society is not without its challenges, as differing values and beliefs can conflict, raising tensions and threatening peaceful co-existence. In recognition of both these points, Horton provides lesson ideas to help teachers facilitate the creation of generative knowledge with their students.

Clausen turns his attention to how diversity is conceptualized in social studies curricula across Canada. In The Uniformity of Diversity in Canadian Curriculum Documents, he analyzes official government discourse, noting the near lack of operational definitions, and the almost uniform expectation/mantra that Diversity is good. Clausen suggests that this uncritical usage is problematic, and he challenges teachers to look beneath the surface of the concept.

PART 3 – DEMOCRACY

In Blogging Democracy, Beaulieu and Epp describe using a Blog as a forum for learning. Over the course of one year, these educators reflect about the meaning
of democracy and how it can be made a lived experience in the classroom. As they consider topics such as the teacher as co-learner rather than expert, the democratic nature of knowledge construction, and the need for ‘brave’ teachers to push the revolution for democratic classrooms forward, references to educational scholarship as well as the voices of teacher-candidates are woven into the narrative.

In *Studying Democracy as an Endangered Species*, Clausen calls for a teaching of democracy filled with passion, tales of conflict, and a defying of the odds. Likening democracy to an endangered species, he offers a field guide for understanding the history of the concept, how and why it has become a species-at-risk (i.e., introduction of exotic influences, overexploitation, and disease), and ways to save the species from outright extinction.

Horton takes on the concept of democracy in *The ‘Ayes’ Have It?* beginning with his recollections of trying to create a more democratic classroom as a grade five teacher. This is followed by suggestions of how teachers might explore the meaning of Democracy, the role of elections, the majority-minority tensions, and the undemocratic aspects of current democracies in the classroom.

Lemisko captures her feelings about democracy in the title of her chapter, *To Believe in Democracy Is to Be Profoundly Optimistic about the Capacities of Human Beings*. Drawing on Kymlicka (2001), she asserts that it is not enough to simply learn about basic democratic structures; rather, the health of a democracy is dependent on the attitudes and qualities with which citizens participate in public decision-making in their societies. Further, ‘the people’ must develop autonomy by learning to critique authority, by engaging in well-reasoned public discourses, and by nurturing a reciprocal sense of justice. Lemisko shares a personal narrative of teaching in Alberta under the auspices of a curriculum that was ostensibly more about the transmission of knowledge rather than about accessing the requisite tools to actually participate in a democracy in a meaningful way. Dissatisfied, she begins to examine the curriculum more carefully, and using an approach to document analysis championed by R. G. Collingwood, discovers a curriculum rooted in presuppositions passed down from the earliest days of education in English Canada.

**PART 4 – MULTICULTURALISM**

In *Living Together, Growing Together*, Horton uses his observations of a teacher-candidate in the classroom as the launching pad for a consideration of the concept of multiculturalism. Through an exploration of how multiculturalism has historically evolved in Canada, and through scholarly critiques of the concept as both philosophical tenet and official policy, Horton is well grounded to offer activity suggestions to teachers that facilitate the construction of generative knowledge with students.

Clausen whimsically invokes titular analogy in *The Tight Fitting Suit of Multiculturalism* to engage in a personal discovery of his relationship with the concept and how he believes it needs to evolve in the future. Returning to his
research roots, he investigates provincial curricula across Canada to unearth how multiculturalism has been conceptualized. Clausen finds the documents wanting, as multiculturalism is constantly juxtaposed with and subjugated to pluralism, diversity, social justice, and anti-racism, leading to a sense of ill-fitting unease. Similar to his increasingly tight-fitting suit, Clausen contends that for multiculturalism to maintain its curricular and educational relevance, it will have to move beyond its historical roots as policy—to let out the seams if you will—and move forward with a more expansive meaning.

As the next chapter title suggests, Lemisko unleashes a clarion call for teachers to move Beyond Foods & Festivals in their approach to teaching about multiculturalism. Finding the Food and Festival approach lacking in substance, she entreats teachers to consider critical ways of teaching and learning about connectedness and culture. Through an exploration of people’s similarities and differences, getting inside cultures to gain a deeper understanding of their tangible and intangible features, and teaching and learning from multiple perspectives within cultures, students will have the opportunity to develop a more meaningful and thoughtful understanding of multiculturalism conceptually as well as how it is ‘lived’ in practice.

Liu Hopson shares a personal reflection in Hey Miss, What’s an “Other”? that challenges social studies educators to incorporate a meaningful and critical conception of multiculturalism in their classrooms. Rather than foods and festivals, she models a taboo-free environment of discussion, thoughtful analysis, and active participation in confronting racism in all its forms. As well, Liu Hopson draws on her graduate research about the ways racialized teachers understand their work, and about the expectations that are often cast upon them as representatives of visible minorities. She describes a fearless form of teaching, recognizing that multicultural education is embedded in the language we use, the dialogues we initiate, and the consciousness we raise as we thoughtfully deal with cultural differences every day of the year.

PART 5 – SOCIAL JUSTICE

Lemisko begins Unpacking Presuppositions for Social Justice by making a distinction between the ‘justice’ based on individual rights in a democracy and the ‘social justice’ found in recognizing power differences and ensuring collective rights for various historically disempowered groups. She suggests that citizens need to develop a sense of ‘reciprocal justice’ as well as a sense of justice based on reducing harm and exploitation; and she encourages actively confronting inequitable power structures in society. Lemisko explores various literatures and the social studies curriculum in her quest to enrich teachers’ philosophical foundations for engaging in social justice as classroom practice.

In The Broom and the Water in Social Justice, Clausen invokes Bunyan’s allegorical story of the broom, the dust, and the water from Pilgrim’s Progress to
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raise questions about modern society’s penchant of turning to the courts to mete out social justice in the form of financial compensation for past wrongs. Believing this approach to be inadequate at best and anti-social justice at worst, Clausen calls on citizens to become involved in their own societies, to reconnect with the ‘social’, and move beyond being simply consumers of social justice to people who ensure it becomes a reality in the worlds in which they live.

Horton asks the question “What is social justice?” in There But for the Grace of God…? and the answer is embedded not only in its root terms social and justice, but in a core belief that the common good of society is based on mutual respect for the intrinsic value of human beings, their differences, and the need to accommodate one another to the extent necessary so that each can flourish as individuals and as members of communities. Horton offers a series of generative activity suggestions for elementary and secondary school, including explorations of philosophical criticisms of social justice through the ages.

Using a reflective narrative approach, Beaulieu explores Social Justice in Social Studies by asking the question “Do we truly cultivate a culture of social justice in our schools and our classrooms?” As he interlaces memories of flourishing as a curious, motivated student in elementary school with the depths of despair as he floundered in junior high, Beaulieu calls on schools of the 21st century and teachers of the digital generation to reconsider what social justice means and to institute practices that will better prepare youth for their futures.

INVITATION

As we said at the outset, creating this book has been a transformative journey. It has at times been at the forefront of our thinking as we wrote, edited, revised, reconsidered, and revised again, and it has occasionally been placed on the backburner as competing work commitments, births, deaths, and other personal events assumed necessary priority. As a result, the main elements embedded within our work are invitations to listen and learn, to argue and critique, and above all to live at the intersection of theory and practice. As we’ve read the contents quietly to ourselves, talked with one another about it further, and considered old ideas anew, our perspectives have been expanded and our understandings enhanced. We hope the book does the same for you, as the conversation continues.

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PART 1

ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE/ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
1. A CASE FOR APPEAL

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Genesis, 1:26 (King James version)

These words, written originally in ancient Hebrew sometime between the 10th and 5th centuries BC, have had a huge influence in shaping Western civilization's relationship with the natural world. Whether it influenced our primordial thinking, or it is a mere reflection of a belief system that was already in place, there is no doubt that a great percentage of states, sects, and individuals throughout the previous two millennia have taken up the belief that humanity is at once different from the rest of the living creatures and plants on this planet, and is somehow superior to them. This text has become such a wellspring of misunderstanding and misinterpretation that most societies today adamantly hold to the belief that, within the bounds of human law, we can do just about anything we like with the animals, birds, insects, and plants that inhabit the entire natural world in order to benefit ourselves. This is due to the fact that, as God's image on Earth, humanity plays the role of judge and jury when the issue of the natural world and ecology are concerned. I would argue, however, that the only thing giving us dominion over the earth is the fact that we have the best lawyers.

This lack of legal representation is borne out by the scant laws that protect the planet, and the great scorn incurred when legal action is attempted on its behalf. In spite of this, numerous cases have been fought to defend the rights of particular species within the legal system: Richard Ryder’s act against pulling wool off live sheep in 1635, Colonel Richard Martin’s Act to prevent the cruel and improper treatment of cattle in 1822; Henry Bergh’s “Declaration of the Rights of Animals,” in 1866, and the many ensuing acts for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the British Commonwealth and the United States. In addition, although several countries have passed clean air acts over the years, their impact remains inconclusive. In many cases, people wishing to protect the environment have had to work outside the law. This may be seen in the particular cases of Paul Watson and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, or the Animal Liberation Front. In most of these
cases, however, these actions have merely resulted in the relief of animal suffering through human intervention and protecting laws. However, the actions undertaken by humans working inside and outside of the law seem to have only strengthened the case for Genesis: Mankind as overlord, cruel or benevolent.

I would like to suggest an alternative case that may not have been previously entertained. In it, I propose that rather than trying to find better and more efficient ways for humans to ‘look after’ the natural world, there should be a challenge as to whether we are fit to do this in the first place. I therefore present the following case of ecological justice:

**Regna Plantae & Animalia** (sans *Homo sapiens sapiens*) *Appellants*

v.

**Regnum Animalia** (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) *Respondents*

On appeal from the court of Genesis

*Ward’s best interest – Parens patriae jurisdiction – Natural rights of the Ward – Protection of Ward’s well-being – Age of consent*

**Cases Cited:**

**Statutes & Regulations Cited:** Criminal Code: R.S.C. 1985, c. C-46 – Child and Family Services Act

*For the past two or three millennia, a de facto contract* [hereafter the ‘Genesis contract’] has been in place between these two parties. In it, a distinction has been made between the two with an implicit recognition that they are made of different substances. It remains the assumption that the Appellants “eat without pleasure, cry without pain, grow without knowing it; they desire nothing, fear nothing, know nothing” (Malebranche, p. 394). Alternatively, the Respondents, are seen to be “How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!” (Shakespeare, p. 85).

It is the contention of the Appellants that since the two parties have first entered into this agreement (see Genesis above), the Respondents have broken the *de facto* contract in two ways. First, the Respondents are accused of changing the definitions of the terms used in the contact to gain unfair advantage. Second, the Respondents are accused of not living up to conditions that give benefit to the Appellants. Based on these grievances, the Appellants are asking that the traditional ties between them and the Respondents be severed and a new contract be arranged.

**POINT 1: STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS IN THE WORLD**

How have the terms changed today from whence they were first written down, and how have the Respondents misused them? This is outlined below.
Ownership

In general terms of contemporary Western society, animals and plants (and the natural world itself) have been largely objectified. To cut a tree, the perpetrator looks to paying off the human owner of the land. Polluters, when caught, pay fines to various nation-states who will then use the money at whim. If an animal is run down on the street, the biggest concern for the driver is if it was owned by any human. If not, the victim is usually left where it lies and the driver is more concerned with a scratched bumper. Each of these instances is common in modern society – humans see animals, plants, and the environment itself as objects that can be bought and sold as property.

This is in contrast to the evolution of thought that humankind has given to viewing its own species. Essentially, through much philosophical discussion, the Respondents of the modern Western world have come to view themselves through existential eyes. Humans are perceived to be free agents to do as they please and suffer the consequences of their actions. However, the Appellants have not been allowed such luxury: instead, they are all still seen to be made by some plan for a definite purpose. Some are seen as bestia faber and must pull a plow, give milk or sniff out drugs. Some are not so lucky, and are seen as bestia instrumenti to be eaten or worn. The same consideration has been given to the flora, water, air and minerals of this planet.

However, is this a proper reading of the Genesis contract? The key action word in the passage is the term ‘Dominion’, and it has certainly come to be understood as synonymous with ‘ownership’. That land, animals, plants, water and pieces of sky can be bought and sold has become the basis of modern economics. In an increasingly commoditized world, the human soul seems about the only thing free from these ties. But, was this the intended meaning when the passages were originally written? This key word is found in the King James Bible translation of the Genesis passage: “Let them have dominion over…”. Most English translations choose to employ the same term (see American Standard Version; Douay-Rheims Bible; Darby Bible Translation; English Revised Version; Webster’s Bible Translation; World English Bible).

Fraught with ambiguity, the term can indeed alternately mean “to have sovereignty over”, or “to possess” (see Concise Oxford Dictionary, p. 340). However, it is undoubtedly clear that in going back to the original translation of the vulgate, the precise Latin translation for the English word ‘dominion’ should have been dominii. However, the actual Latin word that was used in the Latin Vulgate bible is praeedit from the root word praesum meaning “preside over, to be in charge of, to be at the head of” or “take the lead (in)”. Other versions of the Bible have endeavoured to be more accurate: “Let them rule over…” (for examples of biblical variations, see www.biblegateway.com for New American Standard Bible; New Century Version; New International Version; God’s Word Translation; Young’s Literal Translation), and alternatively, “They will reign over…” (New Living Translation), “let them have complete authority over…” (Amplified Bible), “let him be head over…” (New Life
Version), “so that they may take charge of…” (Common English Bible), and “they can be responsible for…” (The Message). What relation is implied by these words? It is certainly not one of ownership – more precise terms could surely have been used (such as auctoritas, authoritas, or even dominium).

Instead, as Walvoord and Zuck (1985) allude, the contract designates humankind as God’s representative (or go-between) in the natural world. So, rather than owner, humanity is more of an authority figure on Earth, collectively given the responsibility of presiding over the world, and, as ruler, making decisions that are supposed to be good for all. But legally, what does this entail? What form of leadership is designated? Many authors (see, for example, Morris, 2003; Reichenbach, 2003) argue that Absolute Monarchy is the proper relationship in this instance. However, the Appellants will now argue how this is an unfair premise given the present state of human affairs.

The Iniquity of Modern Absolute Monarchy: Until 1648, it was generally believed in the West that a monarch was placed in the ruling position by God’s choice, and remained in this position in perpetuity. Because the monarch was made from ‘different material’ than common folk, no subject of the crown could lawfully remove this person from the throne. This was only reserved for God’s judgment.

Until 1648, therefore, the position monarchs held over their subjects was roughly the equivalent to the position mankind held over the rest of the natural world. In that year, a new mentality was expressed in England that set the world upon a new path of relationships between leaders and their constituents:

…whereas it is and hath been found by experience, that the office of a King … and to have the power thereof in any single person, is unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous to the liberty, safety, and public interest of the people, and that for the most part, use hath been made of the regal power and prerogative to oppress and impoverish and enslave the subject; and that usually and naturally any one person in such power makes it his interest to encroach upon the just freedom and liberty of the people, and to promote the setting up of their own will and power above the laws, that so they might enslave these kingdoms to their own lust; be it therefore enacted and ordained by this present Parliament, and by authority of the same, that the office of a King in this nation shall not henceforth reside in or be exercised by any one single person… (‘March 1649: An Act for the abolishing the Kingly Office in England and Ireland, and the Dominions thereunto belonging.’ In Firth & Rait, pp. 18–20)

There can be no doubt that since this time, many nations of the world have come to the same conclusions, and the human world has taken definitive steps to abolish governance by absolute monarchies, or at least weaken this approach to the state of authoritative impotence. Presently, the only states that maintain any vestiges of absolute monarchy can be found in Brunei, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Swaziland, Vatican City, Jordan and Morocco. Many countries maintain a constitutional monarchy with the sovereign maintaining only a symbolic head while the real power
is divvied up amongst elected representatives (with no spiritual connotations). Other countries, like Nepal most recently in 2008, have abolished the monarchy altogether to replace it with a republic. Of course, many dictatorships remain entrenched throughout the globe, but they do not have the temerity to count on God alone to keep them or remove them from power.

What separates these two visions of leadership? It is as simple as this: Before 1648, the position of monarch was one of a priori status. A Monarch is a monarch. Their power comes from above by birth. They can do anything and remain a monarch simply by existing. Since 1648, however, the leader’s position has become a posteriori – leaders gain their positions by their actions, and remain in power as long as they honour the contract between them and their citizens and endeavour to be worthy of the position.

When it comes to the contract between humanity and the natural world, however, it would seem that no new, evolutionary path has been undertaken during this time period. In fact, humans have continued to entrench the a priori mentality of absolute rule for humans over the planet. To relinquish our role would be as silly to us as it would have been to King Charles before he felt the full brunt of the Civil War.

The question that remains is: Should the Respondents’ role be reassessed, subjected to the same reasoning that human leadership has undergone? Undoubtedly, absolute monarchy could not be replaced with any other forms of government that are presently in place on this planet. All others (such as constitutional monarchy, republicanism, and so on) need a voting population that can consciously make choices based on logic, literacy and the ability to think ahead. The natural world does not work in such anthropocentric ways. Instead, the Appellants are demanding that the outworn idea of monarchy be ignored for this case, and replaced with the notion of ‘humans as parents or guardians of the earth’.

The Prudent Parent

The Appellants believe that this change in venue – to the court of family law – will do a fairer job of testing the Respondents’ mettle. Appellants will not argue, to any extent, the finer details of whether or not the Respondents should be seen as guardians or stewards of the Earth, but rather will question if they are doing a good enough job to warrant the extension of this position.

In reading the Scriptures leading up to the questionable passage in Genesis (1:26), God is undoubtedly taken to be the progenitor of all life on Earth (i.e., God the Father). Therefore, if this passage is accepted, humans have been given the status of in loco parentis for the earth. To the Appellants, this is the only acceptable interpretation of the Genesis contract in this present age, as it is the only generally recognized relationship (in human terms) where one may use the undemocratic word ‘dominion’ without raising too much ire.

With this interpretation, the original contract would place humans in a parental role in their relationship with the natural world. However, what type of parents are
the Respondents to be? If we are to take the stance of parenthood that existed when Genesis was first written, the closest would be found in Ancient Hebrew texts that discuss parental rights. Here the concern is less with custody of a father over a son or daughter (although some rights did exist). Rather, there was a greater concern over mutual obligations of the family as a whole (Pollack, 2001, 162–165). Both parents and children are seen as part of a larger web. They have freedom to exist and do what they like within this web, but their rights end when they do damage to any part of the structure. In the end, it is the good of the child and progression of the family, its continued survival in the face of outside trials that holds the most importance for the law.

However, this contractual arrangement was fundamentally altered with the introduction of the Roman concept of patria potestas. Sweeping aside the idea of interconnected family obligations, and even the strongly entrenched idea of maternal power, the Romans replaced it with the notion of the pater familias – literally in Latin, the ‘father of the family’. This position, the highest ranking family member in an ancient Roman household, went beyond the mere status of a biological father (genitor). He (as it was always a male) was considered absolute ruler of the family domus (house) in all concerns including political, economic, religious and domestic.

The power of the pater familias, handed down by the laws of the Twelve Tables, included vitae necisque potestas – the ‘power of life and death’ – over his children, his wife (in some cases), and his slaves. Legally, their lives were ‘under his hand’ or sub manu. If a child was unwanted, for example, the pater had the power to have this burden put to death by exposure. He could sell his children into slavery, or choose spouses for his offspring. Whatever judgment he gave was absolute and final in the eyes of the courts, and anyone under the roof could only escape his rules if they were delivered ‘out of the hand’ of the pater (in most cases by the pater himself), hence the term emancipatio.

In this system the family ceased to be a spiritual union, and was more generally conceived as an economic and juridical unit subordinated to a single person who held a great deal of authority over its members. In fact, legally, the pater familias was the only person endowed with legal capacity, or sui iuris. The paters were the only ones who could possess personal property or have the full protection of the law (the other family members did possess some quasi-legal privileges, but they were not full legal persons).

Over time, the absolute authority of the pater familias tended to be weakened, and rights that theoretically existed were no longer enforced or insisted upon. The power over life and death was abolished, the right of punishment was moderated, and the sale of children was restricted to cases of extreme necessity. By our present century, the concept of pater potestas has become a completely foreign notion to most Western philosophers, citizens and parents. Instead, a series of parental rights and responsibilities have been almost universally established in the area of parental rights and responsibilities.

While no detailed international law specifically defines parental responsibility, the following list, set out by the British Government, does outline the key roles.
Parents are responsible for the following: providing a home for the child; having contact with and living with the child; protecting and maintaining the child; disciplining the child; choosing and providing for the child's education; determining the religion of the child; agreeing to the child's medical treatment; naming the child and agreeing to any change of the child's name; being responsible for the child's property; and appointing a guardian for the child, if necessary (see Parental Rights and Responsibilities, 2014). These responsibilities have also been outlined in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

The Appellants’ earlier argument concerning monarchy holds just as true for this discussion. It is their contention that while leaps have been made in the evolution of human child-rearing and parenting, the relationship between humans and the natural world have remained at the level of *pater potestas*. This continued relationship would be humiliating but tolerable, if the *pater familias* were reasonable, conscientious and enlightened in their role (or in short, act like responsible adults). However, the Appellants now contend that due to the Respondents’ complete inability to act as fit guardians, life has become unbearable for the Appellants. These points will be listed below.

**POINT 2: ARE THE RESPONDENTS UNFIT GUARDIANS?**

In the sphere of human interactions, a number or criteria are used in determining the fitness of a parent or guardian. Now accepted by most Western countries (and international law) as grounds for the removal of parental rights, these include the following: Physical Abuse; Neglect; Sexual Interference; Substance Abuse; Emotional Abuse; and Mental Incompetence of the Parent. It is the Appellants’ contention (supported by ample evidence) listed below, that not only have the Respondents failed in one of these categories, but that they have systematically engaged in all of them to the extreme detriment of the Appellants and themselves.

*Physical Abuse*

A website aimed at education children explains:

Physical abuse is the most visible form of abuse and can be defined as any act which results in a non-accidental trauma or physical injury. This is usually defined as unreasonable, severe corporal punishment or unjustifiable punishment. Physical abuse injuries result from punching, kicking, hitting, beating, biting, burning, or harming in any physical way. (Center for Child Protection and Family Support, 2014)

Here the Appellants would like to distinguish between mere accidents which are unintentional, and abuse which is contact intended to cause feelings of intimidation, unnecessary pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm. More specifically, the
Appellants would like to draw the court’s attention to the incidents listed below that are not occasional, but systematically employed. The Appellants call on two types of abuse, and feel that the Respondents are guilty of carrying out both on a regular basis.

The first form of physical abuse is cruelty as an end in itself, caused by mental disorders and the need for spectacle. Dating back to 1994, the Pet-Abuse.com data-base tracks the many incidents of pet abuse that have been reported and prosecuted around the world. These represent only a small fraction of actual incidents of abuse, but give some insight into the range of atrocities of which the Respondent is capable: beating, poisoning, shooting, stabbing; the list continues into the horizon. In most of these cases, the individual humans claim mental issues or misunderstanding of animal husbandry. In some instances, these are solitary affairs, but more often, the researcher finds a pattern of systematic violence towards non-humans (and a pretty strong indicator towards humans as well).

The suffering of animals has also played a systematic part in human entertainment for thousands of years. The Roman circus maximus was known for its extreme violence towards animals. This has bred a long history of cock-fighting, dog-fighting, bull-fighting, bear-baiting, and bull-baiting to name but a few blood sports. In the Twentieth Century, film-makers inflicted countless harm on animals for dramatic effect. More recently, the Respondents have engaged in a campaign on YouTube that display thousands of videos of real-life animal cruelty for the purpose of spectacle and entertainment. Efforts to stop this activity have been challenged with copyright infringement (Duffy, 2008).

The second form of abuse comes from the need to cause harm for specific gain such as killing animals for food or fur use, or destroying the environment for cheap power. Here the Appellants would like to differentiate between killing in self-defense, and murder for self-interest. Interestingly enough, humans rarely claim self-defense when killing any living creature save their own.

However, in terms of self-interest, humans are extremely efficient and insatiable in their appetites. It is estimated that every minute 90,000 chickens, 1,300 turkeys, 4,160 ducks, 2,000 pigs, 700 cows, 1,280 sheep and 2,700 rabbits are slaughtered for their meat and fur. This adds up to a total of 53 billion animals a year killed for human advancement (these figures do not take into account the billions of fish killed annually). In addition, if one animal dies due to illness, thousands may be slaughtered and their carcasses burned, just in case it might have an effect on man. With a desire to balance the scales, the Appellants would agree that animals have killed humans in the past. In the United States, independent researchers found that between 1979 and 1990, 1882 deaths were reported due to animal attacks (Langley & Morrow, 1997), making the murder ratio approximately one to 500 million.

Unlike the lightening attacks and swift death of the humans in these encounters, it cannot be denied that these animals suffer great abuse as they are being led to slaughter. Just one example of systematic violence includes:
A CASE FOR APPEAL

Every year Australia ships over 4 million live sheep to the Middle East on a month-long journey by road and sea. Up to 100,000 sheep are crammed into a single ship and forced to stand and lie in their own excrement. Tens of thousands die each year during this trip from hunger, injuries and illnesses. Those that survive the journey are roughly unloaded and transported to ‘fattening plants’ before being slaughtered in deplorable conditions. (Berry, 2014)

Negligence

Neglect can take many forms. An example of physical neglect would be the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, or hygiene. This is another form of cruelty – but rather than an active cruelty, it should be considered a passive, more insidious form. After the Respondents have taken natural entities (dogs, horses, trees, birds, etc) and domesticated them, they have in essence recidivated them back to the stage of childhood. They can no longer survive without the intervention of humans to feed, house and care for them. This, in itself, is humiliating enough. But, all too often, the Respondents then fulfill this job improperly. They are slowly starved or dehydrated to death, literally bled dry due to parasite infestations, or slowly garroted by their own collars. This is not a rarity, with a charge of neglect laid on an animal owner every 10 seconds in North America. And these are the cases that are brought to light rather than those buried and forgotten. Perusing the internet for just one minute will bring enough information to make the Appellants’ point:

Five members of the same family have been found guilty after scores of horses, ponies and donkeys at a Buckinghamshire farm suffered neglect. The scene of unimaginable horror that faced RSPCA officers at Spindle Farm in Amersham can now be described. More than 100 horses, emaciated, bones protruding, were dying where they stood from dehydration, starvation and infection. Elsewhere on the farm, 32 carcasses were discovered decomposing into the wintry mud – the horses, ponies and donkeys still lying where they had collapsed. The farm was owned by Jamie Gray – an equine trader with a history of animal neglect. He had been fined £3,500 in 2006 for causing unnecessary suffering to animals – but was allowed to continue his trading business. Gray … told the court there would always be some deaths. The District Judge in this case has had to consider whether animals such as these, destined for slaughter, should be protected under the same animal welfare act which domestic owners need to adhere to. (Harper, 2009)

A Tottenham-area man faces 12 charges under the revamped Ontario SPCA Act after a disturbing case of animal neglect left 28 dead cattle and 24 others in poor health. … In addition to the dead cattle, 24 beef cattle were also removed and taken to another farm to be fed and watered, along with receiving
veterinary care. OSPCA officials said conditions included no apparent water or food for the cattle, poor sanitation and no dry bedding. Dead and live stock were also being housed together. Potential penalties under the new legislation include a jail term of up to two years, a maximum fine of $60,000 and a ban on ownership. (Bowe, 2009)

192 cats removed from waste-filled trailer home. … They said Wednesday that the home contains so much cat waste and cat hair that it will probably be demolished. … [the owner] could face charges of animal cruelty and animal neglect … It’s not clear how long she kept the cats in her home. … [the sheriff] described the interior of the trailer as horrendous and said it was the worst such case he had ever seen. I’m told the bathtub was filled to the brim with [soiled] cat litter and cat hair, Eckman said. The ammonia smell was so strong, our officers could hardly walk in there. … Every time you turned over a piece of furniture, 10 to 30 cats would come running out from under it, he said. Many were visibly afflicted with mites and had apparent eye infections, and numerous animals had patches of fur missing, he said. (Tayloe, 2009)

These are just three examples in an endless parade of human cases. The Appellants remind the court that cases brought to trial represent a mere fraction of neglect by humans of their non-human protégés.

Sexual Abuse

Includes penetration, fondling, violations of privacy, exposure of children to adult sexuality and rape (Under Our Rainbow, 2006). While rarely discussed (and then the butt of humour), these cases are quite prevalent. In viewing the database of pet abuse on pet-abuse.com, one is confronted with a seemingly endless number of bestiality cases. New Scientist Magazine (2006, p. 6) calls it far from harmless and in its Animal Abuse Fact Sheet outlines the details of this hidden crime.

The Appellants also wish to stretch this definition of sexual abuse a little further from the isolated cases mentioned above and extend it to what a large segment of the human population is systematically perpetrating upon the entire natural world. If a sexual relationship is one that takes place between two or more consenting adults for mutual pleasure and acceptance, the use of the world’s natural resources can only be considered rape. Each day 80,000 acres a day are lost to farming, mining, and forestry interests: the Smithsonian Institute estimated that presently the equivalent of seven football field of land is bulldozed every minute (see Butler, 2012).

Substance Abuse

Another reason for removing parental rights is if the parent or guardian is convicted of substance abuse (illegal drugs or other toxins) or illegally introducing it to their wards. Are humans guilty of this to any significant extent? The Appellants argue that
this is undoubtedly the case. Lead, mercury, fossil fuels, PCBs, nuclear waste, oils, soaps, acids detergents, and sulphur. These are just a few of the poisonous substances that are poured into the oceans of the world at a rate of 19,000,000 kilograms a day (or 13,194kg minute).

At the same time, the fact cannot be hidden that increasingly toxic substances have been introduced into the air around the world in general. In Canada, for example, Statistics Canada reported that,

…after reviewing key indicators from 1990 to 2005, it found a 12 percent increase in ground-level ozone (a major component of smog). Smog is created from ozone and fine particulate matter that come from transportation, electricity generation, wood burning and the use of some chemical products. The main source of this increased pollution appeared to be phosphorus from sewage, agriculture runoff and industrial waste, according to the report. It also found that water quality was poor or marginal in 23 per cent of sites tested. (CanWest News Service, 2007)

Emotional Abuse

This is said to include verbal abuse, withholding affection, extreme punishment and corruption, ignoring, rejecting, psychological terror and isolating (Thompson & Kaplan, 1996). It may also entail the abuser minimizing, or “downplaying” the severity of abuse along with the act of invalidation. Invalidation is to reject, ignore, mock, tease, judge, or diminish someone’s feelings. It is an attempt to control how they feel and for how long they feel it (see Shepherd, 2014).

This is perhaps the most devastating aspect of abuse for the Appellants. Not only is the world brutally assaulted each day for human interest, but this suffering is systematically downplayed as not important. Animals are said to feel pain to a much lesser degree than humans, while plants are not thought to suffer at all (see Carter, 2005).

Of greatest concern has been the idea that animals are so plentiful that they are expendable: In scriptural terms, animals were created so that they may give up their bodies to go towards the sustenance of humanity. However, in recent years, the quantity of waste that this has entailed has been staggering. The Respondents consume only a portion of any given food animal, while the rest of the body goes to waste. Approximately 50–54% of each cow, 52% of each sheep or goat, 60–62% of each pig, 68–72% of each chicken and 78% of each turkey end up as meat consumed by humans with the remainder becoming waste after processing. Based on mortality rates and livestock statistics in Ontario, it has been estimated that the annual mass of deadstock alone is greater than 86,000 tonnes. The meat waste from federal and provincial abattoirs in Ontario is believed to be 333,000 tonnes each year. This does not take into account other waste from meat processing, which is also substantial (see Haines, 2004; Jacquot, 2008). This is a devastating fact for the natural world.
That they should die for a cause is one thing. That their deaths should be needless is another.

Another aspect is the seeming uncaring attitude of all those humans involved. For all the visible signs of abuse, most of the world stands by, or include only token punishments for these horrendous acts. Countries that have laws against these acts include punishments that never carry prison terms of more than 5 years or some fine (this includes Canada, the UK and many EU countries). Others have draconian laws that are never enforced (such as the death penalty in Egypt). However, the most populous countries in the world have no laws whatsoever that govern the mistreatment of animals, and only slight laws that deal with the environment as a whole (such as China, Saudi Arabia and Mexico).

Mental Incompetence of Parents

The Appellants’ final and perhaps strongest argument is that the Respondents have not the mental capacity to act as prudent parents for the world. It has been shown that humans not only engage in willful abuse and destruction of the wards that they have been mandated to protect, they have also travelled down a path that will inevitably lead to their own eventual demise. By adding extreme amounts of toxins to the air and water of the world, they have poisoned themselves – for example, statistics have shown the dramatic rise in breathing ailments and cancers in the human race. The products they create that include phthalates, lead, mercury and other chemicals add to this increased mental instability.

Their determination to deforest the planet while increasing fossil fuel emissions will inevitably lead to extreme changes in global weather patterns that may render the planet uninhabitable. At the same time, many medicinal plants, roots, trees and herbs that exist in fragile ecosystems are being carelessly destroyed in this rush for easy living. While it is a well know fact that the world only has a limited store of resources, humans are presently reproducing at an ever-increasing rate. Even if each human demands no more food, clothing, shelter, or transportation than at present, they will strip the world in mere generations.

Of greatest concern is the fact that the humans of the world who control this destruction know and understand the consequences of their actions; yet, they still choose to pursue this path. Even when a determined effort is espoused (such as during the Kyoto Protocol) to help the planet, large sections of the world then whimsically change their minds and reverse the decisions. The Appellants cannot see any other reasons for this except insanity.

APPELLANTS' DEMANDS

The Appellants can only think of two possible separate solutions that may rebalance this obvious abuse of the Genesis contract.
1. **Rid the world of the overlord:** The first solution is to simply continue with the same flawed arrangement or dissolve it and have none. As Homer put it many years ago: “There can be no covenants between lions and men” (Butler, 269). Within a century, which to the natural world, is the blink of an eye, the problem will be solved as all human life on the planet will probably be completely or mostly eradicated. In a sense, the higher court of ecological justice would be called upon to carry out the sentence. This would, of course, be the simplest solution, but would lead to a Pyrrhic victory.

2. **Redraw the terms:** While a much more complicated process, the second solution may finally give redress to both sides. Humans would have to relinquish their title of *pater,* and would have to bestow upon the natural world the title of “emancipio”, adult and of equal importance. This would have to entail a whole process of re-education of humans however. Rather than seeing themselves as distinct from the natural world, humans would have to view their existence in a harmonious balance with the world, where the well-being of humans includes the well-being of all on this planet. This implies a more holistic way of seeing the world as interconnected and interdependent across time, where human societies are understood as not distinct and superior to the rest of nature, but part of it.

   Students will have to be taught about the term “sustainability” in a positively-biased manner, and “exploitation” in ways other than using the guise of neutrality. More importantly, students have to be enlightened about the precariousness of their future. They must be taught to live for action rather than complacency. Most importantly, the lessons they learn in the classrooms must be applied outside. Examples must be seen (for good and bad), that they might follow or eschew. Humans who learn that the world is interconnected and interdependent can come to understand ecological justice as an affirmative and generative concept. And it is only by recognizing that their existence is based on a harmonious balance with the natural world, that they could truly become *bona fide* partners with the Appellants.

   It is the contention of the Appellants that it is only through this second option – that is, renewal of the contract through re-education, that the Respondents may regain their title as ‘stewards of the earth’, and avoid the death penalty. Of course, this may be beyond humankind as it is still presently impossible for many basic rights to be accorded to much of the *human* species, let alone those outside of it.

   This being said, the Appellants now demand a response from the accused.

**REFERENCES**


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2. WE ARE NOT STRANGERS HERE

Sunlight trickles down.
Leaves shimmer and sparkle in the warm breeze,
light reflected like water rushing over pebbles in a shallow stream.
Swishing, rustling breath of the forest
sings harmony with warbling chirps of back-capped chubby chickadees.
Shoulders touch, warmth seeps between, slow breath expanding lungs, quiet rest.
Suddenly he is there – a dash, a leap, then pause and momentary stillness.
Huge dark eyes smiling, long ears upright, tiny brown body trembles with anticipation.
She springs in, grinning,
long ears flat along soft furry body.
Between breaths we all join the game.
Human eyes widen in delight as he dashes under bench.
She is close behind.
Human legs entangled have no time to move,
but he and she are unconcerned.
Away again through roots and tangled branches,
rabbits playing chase, include us in their circle,
laughing.

What wonder! These small beings, running, jumping and chasing for the pure joy of it. And we, who witnessed this play, felt part of it as we sat quietly in the small glade in a stand of trees, near a field, along a riverbank in Saskatchewan. Why were we including in this game? And, why is this story important to me?

I think my life partner and I were included by these beings in their play because, at least in that moment, we acted as if we remembered that we are not strangers here. In quiet rest between eating lunch and the chores of hoeing and picking vegetables, we were simply one of the many inhabitants who belonged in that place and in that time, posing no threat to those who belonged there too. This story is important to me because it symbolizes that which I think important when contemplating the notion of ecological justice – that is, the idea that human beings are not strangers here. But what does this phrase mean, and why did it spring to mind when I contemplated the notion of ecological justice? To explain the connections between my understanding of the meaning of this concept and educating for ecological justice I will explore.

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these questions: Why do I think we need to ‘remember’ why did we forget? Why is such remembrance so important? How can we remember? How can we educate for ecological justice?

In claiming that ‘we are not strangers here’, I am talking about how I think human beings need to see themselves in relationship with the world. We need to see ourselves and feel ourselves as deeply and profoundly embedded in the web of life on our planet and that we are, in fact, deeply connected to both the animate and inanimate. We need to remember that we do belong here, and although we need to meet our human needs within our environments – we must use air, water, animals, plants and minerals to survive—but as ‘belongers’ we have no right to damage or ‘use up’ that which surrounds us.

In my opinion, this is where the notion of ecological justice comes in. When I use this term, I begin with the idea that everything in and on earth has rights – that is, “…that every component of the community of Earth needs to have its say, and to find its place and needs a spokesperson [and that] …no part of that community can be guided in its activities except with reference to the total community” (Berry, 2003). For me, ecological justice means ensuring just or fair resolutions when interests conflict by taking into account the freedom and security (read: group survival/non-using up) of all web-of-life community members. When we remember that we belong and are deeply connected, we know that damaging and using up does not just hurt that which is outside of ourselves; but rather, when we remember we are not strangers here, we remember that damaging or using up any part of the web damages and uses up ourselves. I do not think that we can speak of ecological justice in any meaningful way unless we remember this.

At present, in some circles, it seems to have become axiomatic to express these kinds of ideas, and a reader could ask what I think I have to add to the conversation. With heightened awareness of environmental issues and climate change, catch phrases about recycling, carbon footprints, and saving the planet have entered popular culture and could be taken to represent a paradigm shift in thinking about environmental sustainability. But I am concerned that the underpinning ways of thinking (with accompanying presuppositions) that caused us to forget our deep connections might not be recognized or challenged. And, if this is the case, all the emerging catch phrases in the world cannot and do not represent real remembering. Therefore, as I elaborate my thinking about the idea of ecological justice and explain why I think this connects in a generative way to education, I need to explain why I think we need to ‘remember’ and why we ‘forgot’.

This goes to my understanding of how past ways of thinking are influencing us now, and this arises out of my own particular (and perhaps peculiar) historical ways of looking at the world, which I think I should take time to explain. I need to name my biases and perspectives and explain from where some of my notions have been derived. I am a Celtic (Irish-Scot) Canadian middle class female market gardener, have been a social studies teacher, am a teacher educator and social studies methods instructor, a working historian, an educational historian and a philosopher of history.
In these roles I have been deeply influenced by many interdisciplinary scholars, including historian and philosopher, R.G. Collingwood. Put simply, Collingwood (1946/1993) claimed that philosophizing and ‘coming to know’ is simply a process of asking questions, gathering evidence, constructing a web of understanding through thinking about the relationship between one’s questions and one’s evidence and then thinking/reflecting upon the thinking one has done. Collingwood did not believe this process produced universal and necessary truth. Rather, he believed that knowledge is “something always needing to be re-created by an effort of thought” (Collingwood, 1939, p. 63). This way of thinking about knowledge and philosophizing is very appealing to me. It puts philosophical inquiry and knowledge construction into the hands of any person who is willing to ask questions and think carefully. Coming to know does not reside in the hands of ‘the experts’ – it is democratic.

Another aspect of Collingwood’s ideas I find appealing is his contention that coming to know is subjective, and that human beings can use the questioning, re-construction, reflecting-on-thinking method to come to understand both personal experiences and each other. Thus, unlike some post-modern theorists who seem to me to argue that our subjectivity makes it impossible for us to understand one another, Collingwood (1939) offers us hope that we can develop some understanding if we use the question and reflection approach to get “inside other people’s heads, looking at their situation through their eyes” (p. 58) – a process he calls ‘re-enactment’. In arguing that we can come to understand human actions by coming to understand contexts of the action, as well as the thought/presuppositions lying behind the action, Collingwood has provided me with one way to think about how human beings are connected to each other, which I think has implications in how we might see ourselves connected to and within our environments.

I have also been deeply influenced by Collingwood’s understanding of the importance of history, which lies in his understanding of the connections between the past and the present. Collingwood (1946/1993) contends that the past ‘turns into’ the present or, to put it more concisely, he thinks that the past ‘interpenetrates’ the present. To accept this claim requires us to think about the past and present in a particular way. Collingwood did not use the argument that ‘if we do not understand our past we are doomed to repeat it’. He would have thought this argument somewhat silly because he considered it presumptuous to think that events that unfolded in a particular past context would unfold in exactly the same way in a present context. However, Collingwood (1940) did claim that past ways of thinking (presuppositions) survive into the present and continue to influence the way we act now. He argued that in order to more deeply understand why we act as we do, we need to not only understand the ways of thinking that underpin our present actions, but we also need to understand where, when, and under what circumstances these ways of thinking arose. Only through this process can we come to understand how we have come to think in the ways that we do and challenge ourselves as to whether such assumed, implicit ideas actually continue to make sense. Collingwood’s philosophizing has pointed out for me that it is these past ways of thinking that interpenetrate the present
and continue to influence and shape contemporary human behaviours. If we want to reform, or transform, it is not enough to simply look at what people did in the past and learn lessons from this behaviour; we must look deeply into beliefs and patterns of thinking that arose back then, and try to understand how these continue to affect our present thoughts and actions.

Although Collingwoodian philosophy is rather ‘in the head’ as compared to the ‘embodiedness’ of deep ecology, it was the influence of his philosophical approaches which first grounded my personal inquiries into how we have come to be where we are now in our relationship with the earth. My claim that ‘we must remember we are not strangers here’ is related to my historicity – that is, the belief that our present is affected by presuppositions that have caused us to forget our connectedness. My efforts to explore the questions, “Why did we forget and why (and how) do we need to ‘remember’?” are anchored in this set of beliefs.

I think our forgetfulness about our connectedness within the web of life has arisen as a result of the widespread influence of Western or Euro-centric ways of thinking. While I know that many folks around the world have not forgotten the connectedness of all things/beings, I am afraid that a dominant (hegemonic) way of thinking about economic systems, progress, and development has spread around the world through mechanisms of imperialism, colonization, and conquest. At present, it seems to me that discussions about development are mostly about ways of increasing production and consumption – that ‘progress’ is tied to finding bigger markets in which to sell an ever increasingly large supply of things that fulfill whims and wants rather than basic needs. Even discussions about quality of life seem to be more about material things (e.g., number of: school buildings, books, pencils, paper, shoes) rather than about having time, quiet, relationships and connections. With this evidence before me, I think that humans around the globe are being affected by Western ways of thinking that have caused forgetfulness about connectedness. And, because of this, I think it is worthwhile exploring, at least briefly, where and when these ways of thinking emerged.

In my understanding, Euro-Western forgetfulness about belonging within the web of life has been shaped by several ways of thinking that emerged between the time my ancient Celtic ancestors held rituals in sacred oak groves, or tossed golden jewelry into streams to honour spirits within these places, and now, in the present day, when those oak groves have gone the way of the dodo, and trash is thrown into streams. It seems to me that one of the ways of thinking that had a profound affect on ‘connection forgetfulness’ is that which emerged with Christianity as an organized, hierarchical religion. The way of thinking, which became orthodox between about the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., was based on rejection of the material world in favour of the spiritual. For example, when St. Augustine proclaimed the City of God (and a god who lived outside of and beyond the perimeters of the natural world) as the penultimate goal upon which human beings should set their sights, while at the same time disparaging the City of Man (or the material world) as corrupting, he
shaped and promoted a way of thinking that severed humans from the natural world. Augustine (413–426) wrote:

...Cain was the first-born, and he belonged to the city of men; after him was born Abel, who belonged to the city of God... . When these two cities began to run their course by a series of deaths and births, the citizen of this world was the first-born, and after him the stranger in this world, the citizen of the city of God, predestinated by grace, elected by grace, by grace a stranger below, and by grace a citizen above. [Bold added]

In declaring Abel and others who achieve a state of grace as strangers to and in the material world, Augustine conceived the spiritual, divine, or ‘that which is holy’ as residing outside of the web of life of the natural world – a conceptualization which began to shape a set of beliefs and assumptions underpinning Euro-Western ‘connection forgetfulness’.

This set of assumptions supported a notion of hierarchy in which humans (along with the angels) were seen to be set over, above, or outside of the material, world.

During the 18th century, Enlightenment thought fully encompassed these ideas. Embracing the notion that humans possessed a powerful intellect unavailable to other members of the web of life, Euro-Western thought promoted the notion that we were both separate from and superior to the natural world. Enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1782) proclaimed:

It is then true that man is lord of the creation, – that he is, at least, sovereign over the habitable earth; for it is certain that he not only subdues all other animals, and even disposes by his industry of the elements at his pleasure, but he alone of all terrestrial beings knows how to subject to his convenience, and even by contemplation to appropriate to his use, the very stars and planets he cannot approach. Let anyone produce me an animal of another species who knows how to make use of fire, or hath faculties to admire the sun. What! am I able to observe, to know other beings and their relations, – am I capable of discovering what is order, beauty, virtue, – of contemplating the universe, – of elevating my ideas to the hand which governs the whole, – am I capable of loving what is good and doing it, and shall I compare myself to the brutes? Abject soul! it is your gloomy philosophy alone that renders you at all like them. Or, rather, it is vain you would debase yourself. Your own genius rises up against your principles; – your benevolent heart gives the lie to your absurd doctrines, – and even the abuse of your faculties demonstrates their excellence in spite of yourself.

For my part ...I see nothing in the world, except the deity, better than my own species; and were I left to choose my place in the order of created beings, I see none that I could prefer to that of man.
With this way of thinking, all other beings, including animals, plants and minerals, became items created for human use, and Europeans ‘forgot’ that these beings should be regarded as members of the web of life, important in and of themselves.

During the 19th century, the emergence of positivism (a philosophical position that attempts to purify knowledge of all metaphysical or transcendental aspects and that puts an extremely high value on ‘objective’ natural science and its methods) added another set of assumptions which contributed to Euro-Western connection forgetfulness. While positivism has contributed to development of human knowledge by advocating close and careful observation of natural phenomena, this philosophy also promoted an approach which encouraged humans to examine slices of nature using an increasingly narrow and mechanistic analysis. This analytical approach sponsored development of specialization, where human experts study tiny bits of phenomena in isolation from one another (after all, too many variables muddy the waters). In this support of analysis – the breaking down into bits to try to understand the whole – I think positivism encouraged an approach to knowledge construction at odds with the notion of synthesis – that is, the capacity to integrate bits together to comprehend a wholeness – and ultimately contributed to Euro-Western connection forgetfulness. Positivist philosophers also propounded a hierarchy in ways of knowing which described as primitive or childish any approach to understanding the world that included intuition, animism or wholeness. For example, positivist philosopher, August Comte (1830–42), declared:

In the theological state, the human mind… supposes all phenomena to be produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings. In the metaphysical state, the mind supposes abstract forces, veritable entities (that is, personified abstractions) inherent in all beings, and capable of producing all phenomena. In the final, the positive state, the mind has given over the vain search after absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the causes of phenomena, and applies itself to the study of their laws – that is, their invariable relations of succession and resemblance. Reasoning and observation, duly combined, are the means of this knowledge.

...our speculations upon all subjects whatsoever, pass necessarily through three successive stages: a Theological stage [which contains three stages: animism, polytheism and monotheism] in which free play is given to spontaneous fictions admitting of no proof; the Metaphysical stage, characterized by the prevalence of personified abstractions or entities [world is one great entity in which Nature prevails]; lastly, the Positive stage, based upon an exact view of the real facts of the case.

With this, Comte and other positivists gave credence and priority to a particular way of knowing (techno-rationale) that supported Euro-Western connection forgetfulness. In this approach to knowing, rocks, water, and soil became ‘dis-imbued’ of life – transforming into the inanimate, or ‘non-living’, and so even more
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foreign to humanness than animals and plants (which, although ‘living’, are to be considered ‘objects’ rather than ‘subjects’). In severing our understanding of our deep connections with all members of the web of life, the environment seems to have become a foreign (and, perhaps, frightening) place. However, positivist philosophy gave human beings a way to conquer their fears by promoting the idea that people could and should manipulate, control, or conquer environments as the ‘laws of nature’ were more fully understood through observation and fact-gathering. Rather than operating on the assumption that humans are deeply embedded within the natural world, positivists reinforced the notion that we are outside, objective observers of nature – a place and space totally separate from ‘us’. This way of thinking endorsed our forgetfulness and promoted the notion that humans are strangers within their environments.

Interestingly, this way of thinking lies behind two contradictory contemporary ideological positions regarding the environment: one, (a dominant Euro-Western ideology) allows human beings to exploit the natural world without paying much attention to consequences – the other (one of the emerging ‘eco-friendly’ ideologies), advocates the notion that humans are some kind of aberration – that is, that humans lie outside of and counter to nature, and act as a kind of destructive force, at odds with the natural world. Both of these ideological positions represent what I have been calling ‘connection forgetfulness’ – that is, both positions presuppose human beings as strangers to and in the natural world, rather than members of the web of life who are the natural result of evolution. In my opinion, both of these positions are antithetical to the notion of ecological justice. As I claimed at the beginning, I do not think that we can speak of ecological justice in any meaningful way unless we remember that we are “intimately embedded in a reality greater than ourselves” (Selby, 1998).

But, how can we remember? And, how can we educate to remember?

When contemplating these questions, I think we need to understand that the very approaches we use to teaching and learning have been shaped by Euro-Western ways of thinking; therefore we must recognize that ‘educating to remember’ requires that we tackle the unacknowledged/taken-for-granted suppositions have underpinned these ideologies. To do this, we need to ensure that our pedagogical approaches do not simply reinforce dominant Euro-Western modes of thinking – for example, analysis rather than synthesis – and that we ask learners to engage with the environment not simply as outside ‘objective’ observers exercising their intellect, but also as ‘subjects’ using feelings/perceptions. Using such approaches means that we must encourage learners to access a wide variety of ways to gather and record their perceptions (for example, photography, painting, drawing, poetry), as well as to utilize multiple ways to represent their developing conceptual understandings (for example: story-telling, photography, painting, drawing, poetry, singing, dance, dramatic reenactment).

As teachers, we must open ourselves to multiple ways of knowing and learning. In educating to remember, we must hark back to the time of our ancestors, remember that all early humans lived with the understanding of their deep connections with the
earth, and attempt to uncover evidence (including art & artifacts, songs and stories) that reveal their ways of thinking. I think we should also pay attention to the ways of knowing and learning of peoples who still remember they are not strangers here – for example, to the ways of knowing and learning of the First Nations peoples of Canada. I think that peoples who still remember connectedness can teach educators much about such pedagogical approaches for educating to remember as described by Williams & Tanaka: “Indigenous ways of teaching and learning includ[e]: mentorship and apprenticeship learning; learning by doing; learning by deeply observing; learning through listening; telling stories and singing songs; learning in a community; and learning by sharing and providing service to the community” (2007).

In my experience, young children are wide open to experiential learning that engages them in exploring the wondrous and the mundane using mind and body/ head and heart. However, I have also learned that older children and adults are often puzzled, confused, defensive, and sometimes actively resistant, when asked to venture into ways of thinking and learning that lie outside of their previous experiences. If we are to educate to remember connectedness we must, while remaining gentle and respectful, require learners to take such journeys with us.

For example, in working with teacher candidates, I first try to help them remember their connectedness through a relatively simple activity, which I model as a learning strategy that they could use with children during a Social Studies lesson. The purpose of the activity is to explore the question: What is the connection between ‘identity’ and geography? By exploring the connections, I am hopeful that teacher candidates are helped to ‘remember’. After a large group speculative discussion about what they thinking the connection between identity and geography might be, I ask teacher candidates to:

Paint a picture of yourself using words. Jot down words that pop into your mind when you hear me say the following: Describe:

• Your physical self (what you look like)
• Your feelings (your emotional self
• Things you like to do with friends
• Things you like to do with family
• Things you like to do by yourself
• Future plans (when you grow up)

Pick from these words and write two to three sentences to describe your personal identity.

Next, paint a picture of the geography where you live (grew up). Jot down words of description that pop into your mind when you hear the following:

• The shape of the land (landscape) where you live
• Bodies of water where you live
• The climate where you live
• The trees/plants where you live
• The animals where you live
• The natural resources where you live
• Things made by humans on the land/water where you live
• The smell of the air where you live

Pick from these words to write 2 – 3 sentences to describe your ‘where you live/grew up.’

Compare the two word pictures – yourself and where you live. Do you think the picture you painted of yourself is/has been influenced by where you live? If yes, in what ways?

Use the Think/Pair/Share approach to discuss responses to the questions with a partner and then the whole class.

After engaging in this simple exercise, teacher candidates usually express surprise about what they discovered regarding the connections between their personal identities and their ‘place(s)’ and they comment, with a degree of wonder, on aspects of this relationship that they had not previously recognized. For example, one teacher candidate commented, “I didn’t think it would make such a difference that I was raised in the city, and [name of another teacher candidate] grew up on a farm. I guess the rural, urban thing really does matter.”

In the end, however, I do think that the most important way in which we can educate for remembering is to engage learners in experiences outside the boundaries of schools and classrooms, using place-based learning approaches, where students experience connections with and within various ecological sites though a dialogical conversation where the perceptual (the body) and conceptual (the mind) work in tandem to shape understandings (Kentel & Karrow, 2007, p. 97).

To remember we are not strangers here we must go out into ecosystems, leave the protection of human-created environments, and engage with the soil, plants and animals, wind, rain and sunshine. We need to use our hands to grow and harvest our own food to more deeply understand the relationships between actions and consequences. Growing and harvesting also teaches us that we actually cannot control natural occurrences (like hail, frost, heat, insects, and deer) that can damage what we are growing. We need to experience how and why the deer eat our carefully planted seedlings, remembering that the doe and her tiny speckled fawn need nourishment, too; and when we plant the seeds in a location where the deer will find them as they journey down to the river to drink, we must recognize that the deer have as much right to eat the sweet beet tops as we have. In living side by side with beings who share our places, we can appreciate first hand, both the wonder and frustration of existence, and we can learn to laugh together. To remember we are not strangers here, we need time to sit quietly – to listen – to feel – to simply be with and in the ‘here’. To educate for remembering we need to ensure these opportunities for both children and adults.
No matter how we approach educating for remembering, I think the ultimate goal of the process is to enhance the possibilities for ecological justice. Knowing that we are not strangers here – that is, creating “a sense and experience of belonging, of being “at home,” with all life forms and all places” (Selby, 1998) is a necessary precondition for ecological justice. When we remember we are not strangers here, developing “that mystic sense of limitless belonging” (Capra & Steindl-Rast, 1992, pp. 15 & 57. in Selby, 1998), we become empowered to take meaningful actions toward protection of ecosystems. In remembering connectedness, we can move beyond the pop culture catch phrases about recycling and reducing carbon footprints, into the necessary paradigm shift in thinking about environmental sustainability.

For me ecological justice is a ‘first order’ generative concept. By this, I mean that the notion of ecological justice that results from deep mind and body comprehension of connectedness, lies behind or is the ‘primary generator’ of other ideas. As a first principle ecological justice comes before all the rest. When we remember we are not strangers here, we remember the connectedness which generates ideas necessary for living fully and justly and in relationship with all members of our earth community.

REFERENCES
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