

## CHAPTER 1. Doing and Not-Doing Within the Local Paradigm

### The Moon of Long Shadows (January-February)

In the middle of a chilly, moist morning in the Moon of Long Shadows, I carefully traversed a narrow, slick trail to the bluff overlook. It would probably not dry soon. A halo encircled the moon last night, a presentiment of rain. Now, a southerly breeze prevailed. Linear tufts of dirty white ice clouds covered the sky. Both confirmed the *forecast by halo* and probable rain. Plopping onto the ground with feet dangling over the edge, I gazed across the creek at last year's ghosts. Beeches still bore dangling light brown leaves. Yaupons were still in berry, bright red though few. Empty buff seed capsules hung from leafless sweet gums; brown flower husks splayed from leafless poplar stems; sycamore balls hung on leafless stems. Patches of green added contrast: a few yaupon and titi leaves, a patch of mistletoe on an oak. Goldenrod achenes flew on the breeze.

Death was easy to find in this moon, but life could be found too. Spring could be felt, but in this weather such feelings were acts of faith. Dead, brown goldenrod stalks rose above tiny, growing basal rosettes already in green leaf. Tiny huckleberry flowers dangled, oblivious to the coming winter storm that would end their quest to bear fruit. Hardier red maple flowered too, tiny flowers that would bear fruit, a late-winter boon to squirrels and birds. Beneath and behind the old and dead sprang forth new life even within winter's grip. From the bluff I could make out the track of a frog-hunting racoon near a pool below. Even at the height of winter's cold, the frogs of this pool had been breeding—leopard frogs, cricket frogs, and spring peepers—on the coldest, wettest, nights, using up all their available energy to make it through that one night *of life* and then back under the mud they would go to hibernate until it was warm enough to stay out.

Too cold to sit, I got up and continued the walk-about around the perimeter of the forest. At the western edge, I gazed across the fence at a great expanse of neatly mowed Bahia grass and the horses that fed there. To the south, across the bayou, a huge eighty acre untraversable clear-cut stretched out. Unwanted trees were splayed pell-mell where they had fallen. Trees too young to harvest were bowed down by the extraction process. Two nervous and confused squirrels, with no place to run, no place to hide, scrambled across a bent tree to the crown and inexplicably back to the ground. At the eastern edge were houses, house trailers, and mowed grass, peppered with taller, uncut grass that marked old cars, dog pens, and rusting refrigerators. To the north was more of the same, a trailer and more mowed field. My tiny forest seemed the only forest left.

### The Local Myth *Observed*

In stark contrast to the *humanized* environments that surrounded my land, my simple, ramshackle *cabin-house* had virtually no lawn; the forest ended near the door. Friends and neighbors loved it *because* the house was ensconced in nature as if it had grown there. They would visit and remark how peaceful it was being in nature, just sitting in my tree-house deck, watching squirrels and cardinals and, if lucky, catching sight of a cooper's hawk whizzing through or a fox stealthily passing by on his way to her den under dangling beech roots. And yet, only a few years hence, several of these appreciative visitors stopped renting to strike out on their own, buying a piece of forested land to put their small dwelling and began the construction process by *rubbing out every single living thing with a big yellow bulldozer*, to clear the way for planting grass and Bradford pears. From whence shall the fox, the squirrel, and the cooper's hawk now make a living?

Though at the time I knew little about philosophy, it nevertheless occurred to me that some underlying and *common* position or belief was present, active, and firmly-established in my neighbors and acquaintances that might account for their actions on the land. This position, a habit or style of thinking that I called a *not-doing*, both instigated and unconsciously directed the particular action, or *doing*, of individuals in my community with few exceptions. Doing fit the underlying not-doing like a hand to a glove. The specific underlying assumption in this case, I believed, was an implicitly assumed *proper way to build a human nest*. After extensive observations of the various ways that human nests were developed in my community, the proper way seemed to begin by rubbing-out the diverse and wild natural milieu (i.e., forest, fen, or savannah) and later replacing it with a monoculture of mowed grass to create a fully-humanized and controlled milieu, one sanitized, safe, and tamed. In retrospect, a host of other *lived-assumptions* seemed to enter into the doings of building the human nest as well, including an assumed right to do whatever one desired to their *owned* property and an assumed right of possessing such deeded land: “I paid for it. It is mine. I can do with it as I see fit.” These assumptions I knew to be, not universally-held, but culturally-derived and contingent as attested by a nineteenth century Blackfoot Indian chief who clearly revealed his not-doing concerning land use after U.S. delegates bade him sign a treaty that would have sold part of his ancestral lands:

As long as the sun shines and the waters flow, this land will be here to give life to men and animals. We cannot sell the lives of men and animals; therefore we cannot sell this land. It was put here for us by the Great Spirit and we cannot sell it because it does not belong to us. (quoted in McLuhan 1971, 53)

Implicit in the chief’s words is an entirely different not-doing than the local one, again as inferred from observations. Within the Blackfoot not-doing were the obvious assumptions that one cannot own land; one cannot sell it; one cannot do anything she wants with it. Land is the home for humans *and* animals. In general, the Choctaw Indians that once lived in abundance on these local lands appeared to have held to a similar not-doing as the chief’s. To be sure Choctaw doing has left a light footprint on the land. For millennia Choctaws filled the De Soto National Forest near my home and yet it is with great difficulty that a village site is discovered though no more than a couple of hundred years has elapsed since their passing. Were current human voices so similarly silenced, the remains of their doing would not be so easily covered over and difficult to find.

I made a study of observing the doing of local communities, inferring the underlying, *active* not-doing, the paradigm that informed it. Among my acquaintances and neighbors, paradigmatic assumptions about the nature of the world and the role of individuals within it were unthinkingly accepted as unquestioned facts and, like an invisible hand, these assumptions directed the community’s everyday doing. Such beliefs constituted a myth according to the fifth definition of myth as “an unproved . . . collective belief that is used to justify a social institution,” as found in Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary (1999). In this case we might call this unproven collective belief the *local myth*, and the justified social institution: a *customary* technique for building a human nest. According to Skolimowski: “The myths you act upon become the reality you live in” (1992, 148). To wit, the land surrounding my forest, once wild, had by now through human doing become nearly completely tamed and humanized, a suitable home for humans and the few other-than-human organisms that could adapt.

## Normal Science/Normal Life Techniques

No natural history [or methodology for yard development] can be interpreted in the absence of at least some implicit body of intertwined theoretical and methodological belief that permits selection, evaluation, and criticism. (Kuhn 1962, 17)

Thomas Kuhn defined a paradigm as: “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community” (175). Though Kuhn was speaking specifically about the not-doings of scientists vis-à-vis the doings of science, it is clear that his notion of paradigm would be equally useful to describe the local paradigm, the not-doing or general beliefs, values, and techniques shared by members of the local community as it applied to the doings of life, or *life techniques*.

Science may be defined as any form of systematic knowledge of the world and the pursuit of science the pursuit of such knowledge. Kuhn describes normal science as a form of inquiry undertaken within the bounds of accepted paradigmatic assumptions about the nature of the world, “predicated on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like” (1962, 5). Normal science also assumes that there is a proper methodology to conduct its inquiry (i.e., conceptualizing and theorizing). Through adherence to this *proper way* of science, scientists become members of a virtual community of practitioners who tacitly agree upon general rules, practices, and prerequisites for scientific inquiry, tied together by a “strong network of commitments—conceptual, theoretical, instrumental, and methodological” (42). Through such commitments, an “implicit body of intertwined theoretical and methodological belief” arises within which scientific interpretations of observational and experimental data can ensue, interpretations that permit “selection, evaluation, and criticism” (17). In this way the paradigm of science streamlines and guides its work, keeping it within the bounds of what it accepts as knowledge about the world and the nature of its inquiry, and keeps the scientist and her pursuits within the bounds of both. In this way as well, normal science provides ever more complete articulations of the paradigm, of what is already known: “normal-scientific research is directed to the articulation of those phenomena and theories that the paradigm already supplies” (24). Thus constrained, the scientist remains within the bounds of the prevailing paradigm.

Kuhn’s (1962) model for normal science can be adapted into a model for life techniques. In the same way that scientists use normative scientific techniques seeking scientific knowledge, individual humans seek life knowledge to discover an efficacious human life-technique. Generally speaking, in local communities children eventually leave the parental nest to strike out on their own. In so doing, many find a constructed dwelling and live there. Others may be in a position to create their own nest from scratch, to carve their niche out of the *wilderness* so to speak, and develop a human nest. For such an individual, an inquiry inevitably ensues, one that includes questions about how to make a nest, where to make a nest, what components are necessary, and how to provide for these components. Even if the individual hires someone to answer these questions, the inquiry must ensue. Questions must be asked; answers must be given. Of course, such an inquiry is all-inclusive and includes much more than the simple building of a human nest (i.e., how to make a living, how to respond to the Other, how to think and act in society, etc.)—a life techniques. For purposes here, the inquiry into life techniques will be limited to the art of developing the yard of a human nest.

Following Kuhn’s (1962) example of paradigms within scientific communities, in local

communities paradigmatic assumptions underlay the art of building the outside yard of a human nest, a not-doing of yard development inferred from the apparent, observed normative method for creating one. Just as with *normal* science, within *normal* yard development there seemed to be methodological assumptions about how to proceed. The observed proper doing of yard development seemed to be: to rubout the pre-existing diverse and wild natural milieu and replace it with a fully-humanized, controlled milieu. Normal yard development seemed to follow unquestioned assumptions about the nature of the world, in this case the apparent assumption that non-human organisms were beneath the status of a human and bore little or no consideration. Though few would *say* that other organisms bore no consideration, normative doing seemed to belie that implicit not-doing.

Normal life techniques, taken here as an analogue of normal science, consists in finding ways to individualistically apply the rules and methodologies for developing a yard while remaining within the bounds tacitly supplied by the underlying paradigm. The puzzle for science, remember, is to fully-articulate the nature of the world while remaining within the bounds of paradigm. For life-techniques, the puzzle is similarly to fully-articulate styles of yard development while remaining within the bounds of a hypothetical paradigmatic proper yard, typically accomplished by individual applications of yard art, bordered flower patches, and ornamental trees. These techniques fall within the methodologies and practices of the paradigm for the proper yard and accomplish the practice of yard development without the place becoming wild. Just as no extra-paradigmatic, *new* phenomena or theories of science can be allowed in normal science, no extra-paradigmatic forms of yard development seem allowable in normal yard development, no *new sort of phenomena* such as an overgrown yard (i.e., overgrown implies excess) and certainly no *new theory of yards* that would produce it. Such an uncultivated, wild yard would be considered anomalous, falling outside of the bounds of the conventional yard in much the same way as subjective research would be considered anomalous in normal science and fall outside the bounds of scientific inquiry. Subjective results in science might be fascinating but results in *no solution*. In much the same way, the wild yard might be a good place to visit, but it seemed that no one wanted to live there. Within the prevailing paradigm, the wild yard seemed to pose no solution to the problem of developing a yard.

### **Lived Assumptions: The Local Paradigm**

Our more human experience of the world of meaning has been diminished in direct proportion as money and utilitarian values have taken precedence over the numinous, aesthetic, and emotional values. (Berry 1999, 60)

It is important to note that the not-doing of the local paradigm was unconscious and unquestioned. When asked about unquestioned assumptions implicit in their doing, most people did not realize any assumptions were involved. Having never questioned their doing, few ever wondered why they did what they did. Faced with the question though, several looked at me askew and asked: “What kind of question is that?” and never gave an answer. I covertly made it a practice of observing the doings in my community, inferring possible not-doings to account for them. Though there were no overt rules or standard interpretations that guided life techniques in local communities, that does not mean there was no guidance. As Kuhn said: “Lack of a standard interpretation or of an agreed reduction to rules will not prevent a paradigm from guiding research” (1962, 44). Lack of overt rules to develop a yard did not prevent the paradigm of local life techniques from guiding yard development. Indeed, all yards bore a striking resemblance.

Through myriad observations of local doing over time, I developed five lived-assumptions that I believed to be the essence of the not-doing of the local paradigm. As such, it was—and is—my position that they are untenable for the evocation of humanness. Throughout the time I compiled the list, I never heard or observed these assumptions refuted in the media, at churches, or in schools and only rarely in conversation. Indeed, it seems that to this day any refutation of these assumptions can be found only along the fringes of accepted local culture. Assumptions one and two are concerned primarily with the way humans view their relationship with the Earth and its living communities while assumptions three, four, and five relate directly to the way humans act on Earth.

### **Assumption 1**

The Visions of Eternity,  
by reason of narrowed perceptions,  
Are become weak Visions of Time & Space,  
fix'd into furrows of death.  
(William Blake)

The first assumption of the observed local paradigm is that the universe is a largely empty container, one sparsely populated with particles of inert, lifeless matter. This notion, a summary of what Carolyn Merchant calls the “ontological assumption” (1989, 229), is the product of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, a formative period of Western science (see also Berman 1989; Capra 1996; Goldsmith 1998; Keller 1985; Roszak 1973). The ontological assumption has become so dogmatically unquestioned in the West that any other view seems nonsensical. In an informal survey of local people of varying backgrounds and education, the unanimous conclusion was that there is nothing in space—*empty space*—and that matter is dead—*dead as a stone*. Any notion of a living universe flew in the face of common sense. Merchant details the historical line of reasoning that initiated and instituted the ontological assumption and the paradigm of Western science. In throwing over the earlier paradigmatic model of a living universe-living natural world, Western science reduced the living universe to an empty container universe of dead matter. For Merchant, this constituted the death of nature.

Through the use of analysis, the “methodological assumption” (Merchant 1989, 231) of modern science, the dead universe argument was reinforced and furthered. Analysis “assumes that a problem can be analyzed into parts, and that the parts can be simplified by abstracting them from the complicating environmental context and then manipulated under the guidance of a set of rules” (231). With the “epistemological assumption” (232) of modern science, sense data was made available to analysis. Sense data came to consist of discrete and atomic bits that could be analyzed, just as discrete and atomic bits of matter had been analyzed in physics. Through analysis, reasoning about parts and wholes was simplified into simple arithmetic addition and subtraction. Both sense-data and matter could now be manipulated in the same way that numbers are manipulated in an adding machine. This is how the entire universe and human knowledge of it came to consist of discrete, atomic, and independent parts that could be combined and dismantled, *partes a partes*, just as a clock or machine could be assembled and dismantled. A universe-as-machine model of the universe was the product of these assumptions, a model that threw over the previously-held organismic model. Machines are tools. Roszak (1973) maintained that, as the new science was wedded with technology, the universe became increasingly a tool, ripe for exploitation. By the mid-seventeenth century the telos of the Western inquiry had become one of “order, control, and

manipulation” while rejecting “ideas compatible with change, uncertainty, and unpredictability” (Merchant 1989, 195). The latter were, for the most part, ignored. Through analytic inquiry, particles of matter increasingly appeared inert and lifeless and the universe became one of billiard-ball particles that moved about and collided predictably according to precise causal and mathematical laws. In a word, the universe was *dead*.

The resultant corpse was a mechanical system of dead corpuscles, set into motion by the Creator, so that each obeyed the law of inertia and moved only by external contact with another moving body. (Merchant, 195)

## **Assumption 2**

“I had no need of that hypothesis.” (Laplace)

The second assumption of the local paradigm is the apparent absence of an Earthly presence of the divine or sacred. In the absence of the sacred, what remains is profane as the Latin *profanus* indicates: an Earth *outside the temple*. Commonly-held notions of divinity consist—rarely—of the skeptical move of atheism or agnosticism. For most purveyors of the local paradigm though, the divine is believed to exist, just not *here*. Banished from Earth, the divine resides in heaven. Tiny bastions of sacred space are believed to exist on Earth, in churches or church sanctuaries, but overall there appears to be little in the way of a divine Earth lived in local communities. Overt statements of belief and inferences from actions militate against it. A lifeless, outside-the-temple Earth is effectively stripped of divinity. In the local paradigm, the Earth is relegated to a theater or playground for the human drama, a laboratory for the human experiment.

Seeking the origin of this assumption, we turn again to the seventeenth century origins of Western science. For Morris Berman (1984), the realization of a value-free, profane Earth was the logical conclusion of the institution of a value-free science, a science finally freed from the imposed constraints of ecclesiastical imprimatur. In the seventeenth century, weakened by the Reformation and widespread social instability, the Church joined the new scientists and their allies, the artisans, in a political and religious campaign to stabilize social and ecclesiastical order. As of yet, no stable methodology for inquiry existed, no *modern science*, but the push was on to establish one, and “what modern science came to regard as abstract truths, such as the radical separation of matter and spirit, or mind and body, were central to this campaign” (103). Separating matter from spirit instigated and insured the banishment of the divine from Earth.

By this time two class-based camps competed for Europe’s minds and hearts. The upper class embraced the convergence of Calvinism, laissez faire capitalism, and the new science. Artisans, for instance, pushed the limits of technology and increasingly began to *see* nature through the emerging lens of mechanism. A “merger of scholar and craftsman, geometry and technology, was now occurring within the individual human mind” (Berman 1984, 48). Berman elaborates:

The rise of linear time and mechanical thinking, the equation of time with money and the clock with the world order were parts of the same transformation, and each part helped to reinforce the others. (46)

The lower classes held to the older Hermetic beliefs as Berman describes:

At the center of [Hermetic] beliefs was a view of nature directly opposed to the new science: the notion that God was present in everything, that matter was alive (pantheism), that change occurred via internal conflict (dialectical reason) rather than the rearrangement of parts, and that . . . any individual could attain enlightenment and have direct experience of the Godhead (soteriological alchemy). (1984, 114)

The cultural, religious, and economic powers were fearful of Hermeticism as a movement, if it could have become one, because it would have served to undercut and decentralize their power and lead to further social destabilization. To wit, an unlikely coalition united in opposition to Hermeticism composed of: purveyors of the new science, Christianity, and capitalism. Berman (1984) took pains to note that this united rejection of Hermeticism was more the result of a politico-religious attack than a formal plebiscite regarding its validity. By the end of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, the new science was firmly established and Hermeticism a memory. Value-free and unfettered by dogma, this new science sought *natural* explanations for natural phenomena. For such a science, agnosticism should be the logical skeptical endpoint. Of the divine, such a scientist simply *could not know*. But for the new scientists, agnosticism was not enough. Through their unprecedented success at explaining, predicting, and controlling matter, they had become *the* purveyors of truth. Scientific explanations were given priority over other explanations for phenomena, even when their explanations overreached what their methods could achieve. In such a climate, divine and supernatural explanations became impossible to defend. The divine and sacred were finally fully expunged, for thinking individuals, from the Earthly realm. Confidence in scientific explanation and its universal validity reached its zenith with Laplace, who, when asked by Napoleon I why there was no mention of God in his explanations, famously replied, “I had no need of that hypothesis” (quoted in Deaken 2006, 3).

### **Assumption 3**

“They are godless creatures; so kill them all.” (Caller on the radio)

“You did what? Are you are as dumb as a rock?” (Family member)

The third assumption of the local paradigm confines the domain of sentience exclusively to a few *higher* animal species (i.e., primates, dogs, birds, and arguably a few others). All other beings, living and nonliving, are considered insentient. In an informal survey of friends and acquaintances, nearly everyone agreed that higher primates, like chimpanzees and gorillas, possessed sentience. Most agreed that *their* dog or cat possessed sentience; curiously several of this group were not sure about other dogs and cats, only their own. Among college-educated friends, the consensus was that all mammals and birds were sentient. Most agreed that reptiles and amphibians might be, but few thought that fish were sentient and none thought that more primitive animals (i.e., worms, crustaceans, or insects) were sentient. Though those surveyed were not specifically asked, it seemed that no one would extend sentience to a plant or non-living entity (i.e., stones, dirt, rivers, or clouds). Indeed, when one friend *was* asked about this, his answer was the question, “You don’t believe that! Do you?”

Interestingly enough, it seems that notions of sentience, feelings, and sensitivities are tied to emotional distance. Creatures to whom one has a relationship of some kind (i.e., the squirrel in my trees whom I feed, the birds that come to my birdbath, the dog that licks my fingers, the cat that sleeps on my window sill) are considered to be sentient and to possess feelings and sensitivities.

Further, it seems that Rosie the chicken that runs around my yard, picks caterpillars from my roses, and lays eggs for me is a feeling creature, one that I would be loathe to kill and eat. This chicken to which I have attached an emotional significance seems to be different *in kind*, not degree, to the chicken in the store that provides chicken wings. Of course, no one would say they were different in kind; everyone *knows* them to be the same creature, but no one *acts* that way. Through an emotional distancing, the chicken-over-there becomes a machine. Through their somewhat predictable behavior, determined in a Pavlovian sense, these animals are dumb. As machines are determined, determined creatures must be machines as well. Thus they become molded in thought—or lack thereof—into animated but insensate machines, incapable of feeling. Emotionally-distanced chickens, pigs, and cows become commodities, component parts of food-producing assembly lines, to be kept alive until market-ready and pumped full of chemicals to keep them so. No considerations for chicken sensitivities and cow feelings need be taken. They do not have them.

Along these lines, there is a widespread, folk belief that only self-conscious knowing creatures can conceive of the divine and therefore be part of any divine *plan* for the Earth, relegating everything non-human to a godless and profane status. This became crystal clear while I listened to a debate concerning an inevitable ban on gill-netting, a fishing technique that kills all fish caught in the net regardless of their usefulness. With gill-netting, unwanted fish are discarded as waste. Many callers to the radio show decried the wasting of so many fish and warned about the potential effects of gill-netting on marine ecosystems. One caller memorably took exception to that entire line of discussion saying, “They are all godless creatures; so kill them all. It doesn’t matter.” For this man, *godless* fish obviously possess little if any sentience and were unworthy of concern.

#### **Assumption 4**

“Any human land-use trumps *any* non-human need.” (Neighbor)

The fourth assumption of the local paradigm is the exclusively anthropocentric rubric for determining value. To illustrate, let us revisit the development of a yard. It is *her* piece of land, squared off, measured out, bought and paid for; now she can do with it as she pleases. The heart of this notion of property rights was expressed by John Locke several centuries ago:

Land that is left wholly to nature, that hath no improvement of pasturage, tillage, or planting, is called, and indeed is, waste; and we shall find the benefit of it amount to little more than nothing. (1690/2004, 23)

In such a view, the intrinsic value of things comes to depend only on their usefulness to the life of man. Locke’s apple has no value other than that someone might pick and eat it. By enclosing a parcel of land and working it, land too amassed value. Unworked, unused land *anywhere* is a considered a waste:

The wilderness that he cannot personally see has no value to him. Hence the universal assumption that an unused hinterland is rendering no service to society. . . a blank place on the map is a useless waste. (Leopold 1949, 176)

Thoreau experienced this same idea being played out in the *use* of the land around Walden pond, stating that the pond would have been better named for some beast that lived and roamed its shores

than for its owner:

[Name it not for the owner] who thought only of [the pond's] money value . . . who exhausted the land around it, and would fain have exhausted the waters within it; who regretted only that it was not English hay or cranberry meadow,—there was nothing to redeem it, forsooth, in his eyes,—and would have drained and sold it for the mud at its bottom. It did not turn his mill, and it was no *privilege* to him to behold it. (1854/1999, 157)

In local communities, wealth and well-being seemed congruent. The pursuit of wealth, the maximization of self-interest had become moral—and rational. Indeed, Ayn Rand (1964), an acolyte of capitalism, named a book *The Virtue of Selfishness*. Acting on self-interest brought forth the common-interests, guided by the mysterious workings of an *invisible hand*, as Adam Smith declared:

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their self-interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our necessities, but of their advantages. (quoted in Heilbroner 1953/1986, 55)

In review, in the local paradigm it seems assumed that unused land is worthless. It also seems rational for individuals to maximize self-interest. Selfish acts seem moral because self-interest inevitably enriches the commonwealth. A neighbor once told me that any human land-use absolutely trumps *any* non-human need. Though perhaps an extreme version of the local paradigm, this is what I saw lived all around me. Huge forests were clear-cut for the production of paper products with little regard for the animals that lived there. Rivers were dammed for the production of energy without regard to riparian ecosystems. House lots were cleared of ecosystemic dynamism to make way for a particularly common version of the “local yard”: one species of grass, Bradford pears, and perhaps a crepe myrtle. “How can you expect the birds to sing when their groves are cut down” (Thoreau 1854/1999, 154)?

### **Assumption 5**

“Enough? It’s never enough.” (Family member)

The fifth assumption of the local paradigm is the assumption that there is never enough. Through this paradigmatic *lens of scarcity*, a half a cup is always half-empty, never half-full. The doing that arises from viewing the world through this lens is the vain attempt to fill the *unfillable* cup of security and have enough. The attempt is vain because one can never have enough to be absolutely secure; absolute security is a chimera. Under the auspices of the lens of scarcity, individuals are preoccupied with work, money, the acquisition of things: a *getting while the getting is good*. My father once told me: “you rest when you die,” an idea that Thoreau described eloquently:

We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and so they take a thousand stitches to-day to save nine to-morrow. (1854/1999, 74)

In the taking of a “thousand stitches,” a human is never completely *off work*. Indeed, in the local paradigm, the nearly universal behavioral inclination and predilection arising out of the lens of scarcity is the collection of material artifacts and attending-to the means of attaining them. Duane Elgin makes a similar point with his description of the life telos of the West: “the ‘good life’ is dependent upon having enough money to buy access to life’s pleasures and to avoid life’s discomforts” (1981, 39). This is rational enough; the good life must indeed depend somewhat on having access to life’s pleasures while avoiding its discomforts and, in the local paradigm, that access is usually derived through the medium of money. Through work one might earn money to buy bread, clothing, and shelter. As for pleasures: a meal in town, a movie, an opera, these are met the same way: through work and money. At this point, with needs and pleasures met, does one get off the work-treadmill to do something else or just *be*? Not in the local paradigm, nearly everyone seems preoccupied with work, more often than not at unfulfilling jobs or one they would at least like to change, spending the greater part of their waking day for the acquisition of money to be exchanged for material artifacts. Human provisioning is a nearly continuous affair; the appetite for artifacts seems limitless. One is either engaged in work to enable buying or is engaged in buying. These behaviors seem to go beyond purchasing goods and services to supply needs and wants. They have little to do with being hungry but seem to be an attempt to fill an unfillable cup. As a recent example of the lens of scarcity, upon hearing that I was to cease working, foregoing income and savings to return to college, a family member, lavishly rich by my standards, told me that his desire would be to do just that, to stop working and return to college. My reply was for him to go ahead and do it, that he already had enough. He looked down for a moment in silence, shook his head, and through squinched eyes answered: “Enough? It’s never enough.” The lens of scarcity had found a home.

### **Rejecting the Local Paradigm**

By 1986 I had rejected the local paradigm outright, years before my eventual move to the woods. The local paradigm seemed un-human, incapable of evoking humanness. I wondered how I might live in a manner that did evoke it. To reject a paradigm is one thing, but to live without one quite another. In light of the overt rejection of the local paradigm, I sought a different way to live, informed by a different set of insights. I began to analyze what I did believe about the world and its nature. This period of my life was accompanied by intense feelings of insecurity as I began living unbound by local norms. Kuhn declared that insecurity precedes any shift in paradigm: “Because it demands large-scale paradigm destruction and major shifts in . . . techniques, the emergence of new theories is generally preceded by a period of pronounced . . . insecurity” (1962, 67). I surmised that, whatever their sensitivities to the natural world, my neighbors avoided the insecurity of developing a new paradigm *because* of the insecurity it engendered. Kuhn said that the avoidance of insecurity limits those who seek novel solutions to old problems to those with little invested in the old paradigm. These individuals are either so young or “new to the crisis-ridden field that practice has committed them less deeply than most of their contemporaries to the world view and rules determined by the old paradigm” (144). Indeed, only young people spoke to me of a desire to give over the old ways, to build a place in the woods, and live there. For my older friends, those already ensconced in the given world and captured by the techniques of the local paradigm, the idea of going to live in the woods provided no solution. For them, all this talk about moving to the woods and living in solidarity with the Earth and all its inhabitants was to escape into a dream-world. “Get real!” they told me. “Science will solve all our problems.” Kuhn said that shifts in paradigm are always met with “the assurance that the older paradigm will ultimately solve all of its problems, that nature can be shoved into the box the paradigm provides” (1962, 151).

Rejecting the entreaties of concerned friends, I moved into the woods to begin a nature phenomenology ostensibly to learn to become a fully-human being. If I could develop an explicit set of guides for my doing, I thought, I could find a way to become human and perhaps help guide others along similar roads. Early attempts at creating such a guide were a conflation of the products of introspection, of primal spirituality, and of deep feelings educed by nature. These attempts were acts of faith too. No early insight was *proven* viable. I was just guessing. Kuhn (1962) said that a person siding with a nascent paradigm, before it has decisively solved the problems with the old, must do so on faith! The nascent paradigm needs “first supporters” too, people “who will develop it to the point where hard-headed arguments can be produced and multiplied” (158). Determined to be a first supporter of the foreshadowed *new paradigm*, one felt more than known, I moved into the woods, seeking first a guiding set of explicit insights to follow and make my own, a working hypothesis from which a phenomenology might proceed.