The Recursive Character of College Writing

CHRIS KEARNS

Assistant Dean of Student Services
University of Minnesota

Acknowledgment of another calls for recognition of the other's specific relation to oneself, and . . . this entails the revelation of oneself as having denied or distorted that relation.

STANLEY CAVELL, *The Claim of Reason*

If our explanations or our understanding of the universe is in some sense to match that universe, or model it, and if the universe is recursive, then our explanations and our logics must also be fundamentally recursive.

GREGORY BATESON AND RODNEY DONALDSON, *A Sacred Unity*

When I took my first position as a graduate student instructor of composition and comparative literature more than twenty years ago, universities typically paid scant attention to mentoring graduate assistants in pedagogy. Although there were some discussions of the application of rhetorical and expressive models of composition to undergraduate writing—I, like many colleagues from that era, found myself developing an understanding of what is at stake in undergraduate writing in coffeehouses and library carrels as I graded papers, talked with fellow instructors, and prepared my thrice-weekly classes. At the time, I little suspected we were cultivating insights into the recursive character of college writing that would remain a mainstay of my pro-

fessional academic work for the next quarter century and would ground my understanding of student development within the context of the educational process to the present day. Although we do not normally discuss college writing in such terms, the recursivity of undergraduate prose, its complex form of self-generating reflexivity, not only distinguishes university-level composition from more basic forms of writing instruction, it also provides the essential tools necessary to understand and take greater responsibility for the ways our relationship to language maps the surrounding world and orients our attention prior to any conscious decisions on our part. College writing, in other words, provides an opportunity to form the contents of our consciousness and the effectiveness of our communication and also to shape the constitution of our character.

These days I spend most of my time as an assistant dean directing student services, career support, and liberal arts academic advising at a Big Ten university. A uniquely rewarding aspect of this role is provided by the opportunity to work with undergraduates from scores of academic disciplines at all stages of their undergraduate careers. Because I focus on composition and forms of literacy when I teach, and also because I believe composition serves as a core educational competency for all majors, I frequently find myself talking with students about the role of college writing in the educations and lives of undergraduates.

One recent pivotal conversation about college writing occurred in an hour-long discussion with a young man completing a technology-related degree. He indicated considerable dissatisfaction with the writing training he had received at the university, saying that although he was well educated to work as a Web designer and computer programmer, he had a strong interest both in improving his ability to express himself personally and in developing business communication skills. Given his sparse training in writing and communication more generally, he felt the technical components of his education were insufficiently connected to his personal interests and his professional goals. His education, therefore, seemed incomplete in ways he found troubling. "I've always done creative writing," he noted, "but there's no place for it in my degree, and I don't show anyone what I write anymore." The disconnect between his education and his

personal writing was problematic, in part, because it was through such creative writing that he had first discovered and articulated his interest in computers.

Even more troubling for this technology student, though, was his lack of professional writing experience. He asked how he was expected to succeed in the work world if he did not know how to put his ideas into writing in ways that made sense to nonspecialists. "Unless we learn how to write and how to talk effectively," he said, "guys like me end up in cubicles working for people who do know how to communicate." At that point, the young man made a comment that I subsequently found reverberating throughout conversations with other undergraduates over the next few months. Speaking in a semiapologetic tone, he said, "I almost feel like I have to shame guys like you into giving us a better education."

An avid reader of our campus newspaper, my young friend knew about the drive to improve graduation and retention rates, the push to incorporate business-style performance and accountability measures in higher education, and the appetite for data-driven decision making at upper levels of educational administration. These were some of the topics he wanted to discuss with me as a way of thinking about future options and whether he might like to work in university education. He was disappointed that the focus on objective outcomes measures had, as he saw it, diverted attention from students as people with a full set of interests and life goals, disposing universities and colleges instead to view undergraduates from the perspective of educational bottom lines. Although his characterizations were both incomplete and at times extreme, I found myself inwardly agreeing with a number of his criticisms. "We are left to ourselves to learn about leadership and management in the real world," he summarized. "We aren't taught to speak or write or communicate our ideas. Those of us in technology aren't usually very good at speaking with people in power to begin with, and this means many of us can't have the kind of careers we want."

Sensing that such concerns might have broader applicability to undergraduates as a whole, I wanted to talk about them with my first-year advisory board, a group of some ninety newly matriculated undergraduates interested in involvement opportuni-

ties at the university and in improving our approach to undergraduate education. Because they are new to the university, we typically focus on transition issues between high school and college and on topics related to adjusting to college-level expectations and workloads. I asked this group about their high school experiences with writing, how well prepared they felt for college, and what they hoped for from the undergraduate writing experience. As anticipated, many of the same themes stressed by the technology student reappeared in the discussion of humanities and social sciences undergraduates and also featured prominently in the conversations of arts and exploratory students.

One common frustration with high school writing education was driven by the sense that much of the work was repetitive and geared toward addressing group deficiencies rather than developing individual strengths. One young woman commented on her experience of high school composition by noting, "Sometimes it feels like we have to keep going backwards for a certain percentage of the class, as if there's no bar you can count on as a starting point for the whole class." She was eager to study writing in a setting characterized by standards and a steady progression of skills. I did not share with her that one of the most common complaints of students who have completed our writing-across-the-curriculum series is precisely that it lacks a common set of expectations and is all too frequently perceived as being calibrated to redress weaknesses rather than building on the educational foundations already in place.

Another undergraduate commented on the general lack of intellectual challenge in her previous compositional work by observing, "Writing in high school was always so obvious. It was like: 'compare and contrast these two books' that had obvious similarities or differences." Although a number of the students reported positive experiences, especially in connection with outstanding individual teachers and with honors or advanced composition courses, my impression of the general consensus was that our incoming freshmen were frustrated with their preparation for college-level composition. On the whole, they did not know what to expect regarding the type of work they would be required to do, and they consequently had little sense of how

well or deficiently positioned they were to cope with the demands of college-level writing.

Through their self-descriptions, the students tended to divide into two groups, a small contingent who felt they were ready for college writing, and a much larger group of students who were uncertain of the state of their preparation and worried that they might not have the skills or background to be successful in composition. On the whole, the students who felt positioned for compositional success indicated they had taken an integrated approach to writing in high school, one that emphasized the interdependence of writing, learning, and thinking. Most students in this group had found themselves pushed to improve their skills and mentored to view writing as an open-ended process. These were attitudes they were now bringing to the college classroom. In explaining the importance of writing instruction to her educational prospects in college, one of the more confident undergraduates related: "Not being able to write is like not knowing your name. You're just completely paralyzed. I think they all go hand-in-hand—reading, writing, and communicating. I mean, you can't really develop one without all the others."

By way of contrast, the students who felt uncertain about or poorly prepared to cope with college-level writing tended to describe approaching composition as a compartmentalized, quasi-mechanical exercise unconnected with the rest of their education. "I never had any individual feedback from my English teacher," one of these students said. "It was all: here is your assignment; here are the guidelines, here is your grade." Regardless of their sense of the state of their preparedness, the majority of students agreed that what they wanted from their college writing experience was a chance to incorporate it into the rest of their education. Furthermore, a surprising number mentioned the need and desire to develop their own individual prose voices. They wanted their writing to sound like them. Finally, most of the students registered an awareness that they needed experience with many different types of writing, including analytic and expressive prose, research writing, disciplinary specific texts, and technical writing.

After meeting with my first-year advisory board, I discussed the question of college-level writing with a junior majoring in

English who also volunteers on a part-time basis to help tutor high school composition students. She had shared many of the frustrations of the first-year students at the outset of her own undergraduate education. But she had since made an important discovery concerning the connection between writing and thinking. This represented a change from her precollege attitudes toward composition. Although she had been a prolific letter writer in high school, preferring that nearly anachronistic form of communication to e-mail, she said she had never been committed to her compositional homework. "College was the first time I felt bad if my case wasn't strong," she explained, "or if I just whipped up something at the last minute and handed it in like I did a million times in high school." I asked her why she had found writing letters easier than drafting papers before coming to college. She indicated there were two crucial differences between letters and papers: In her letters she cared about what she was saying and she also cared about her reader. Neither attitude characterized her approach to high school papers.

Although I did not indicate as much at the time, investing simultaneously in one's position as a writer and in the needs of one's reader are two of the three steps necessary to take a recursive approach to composition. This student had, in other words, begun mastering the basics necessary to succeed at collegiate composition even though she had done so outside the confines of her formal high school course work. Speculating about why she changed her attitudes toward composition as an undergraduate, she said, "I felt like my writing became a lot more personal in college, because the topics I chose to write on were usually my own." She went on to describe a Shakespeare essay she had written the previous semester. "That paper was the first time I felt like I made connections that were really mine," she recalled. "And even though I finished the course, I'm still not done with the paper; I'm still working on it. I think it may become my senior thesis."

We also discussed what I regard to be the three most common approaches to writing that students bring with them from high school. (In my view, some students have no interest in writing whatsoever, and it is difficult to fathom their understanding of a university education. But even the students who bring an

interest in writing to college usually have formed no clear conception of writing itself and instead see undergraduate writing primarily as a means to other ends.) These common approaches to writing tend to divide into three camps. The first group views writing as a transaction or performance designed to please the instructor in order to earn a reward. Students, they believe, submit papers in return for grades. The resulting grade point average serves as a barometer of *institutional success*. For some, this means that collegiate writing is pure theater, a game of guessing what the teacher holds behind his or her back and of saying whatever the teacher wants to hear. Others subscribe to a contractualist view of the student/teacher relationship. They judge that the instructor is gratified and grades are secured by following long-established rules. Both attitudes interfere with learning. The undergraduates who approach their papers in the spirit of politically motivated guesswork are altogether too pliant to accompany their writing by any inward change of perspective. Similarly, the contractually minded students tend to believe they have already acquired the fundamentals of composition through their work in high school English classes and they often do not open themselves willingly to instruction and advice that might help them become better writers.

Furthermore, the second group also typically views writing as an extension and declaration of the self. Members of this cohort exemplify what Charles Taylor calls "expressivist youth culture" (*Varieties* 82). As Taylor outlines, the rise of this culture is rooted in Romantic ideals regarding the primacy of the private individual, the value of authenticity, and the quasi-moral imperative of self-discovery. It is driven both by an expanding consumerism and by the kind of self-concern that was once the purview of the wealthy. As part of "the expressivist turn" in the Western world view, Taylor argues, youth has become accepted as a distinct stage of life to be distinguished both from childhood and from the responsibilities of adulthood.[1] In college composition classes, expressivist undergraduates tend to regard writing as an organic process to be evaluated on the basis of its sincerity or intrinsic beauty rather than according to *external* criteria such as coherence or cogency.

The third group regards writing as an instrumental tool rather than as a transaction or a form of personal expression. For instrumentalist students, college composition consists of a collection of techniques and protocols for communicating information in the service of presumably higher-order goals such as creating a portfolio for prospective graduate schools or job opportunities, promulgating strongly held cultural values or religious beliefs, or producing insights into science or the humanities. Although they are often interested in grades as well, instrumentalist students are primarily concerned with being right or effective with respect to the larger aims toward which they are directed.

I told the English major that I still found those three approaches to composition dominant among undergraduates, and I shared sample comments from my first-year advisory board that seemed indicative of each of the three views. "College-level writing starts with such attitudes," I said, "but we fail our students if we make it easy for them to believe the most important feature of undergraduate writing is to be found in the academic record it builds, the personal expression it affords, or the causes it enables us to advance." College-level writing cannot begin to come into its own, I maintained, until we discern that all of these attitudes are tied together by a single common thread that needs to be cut.

Despite their varying aims, the three most common approaches to undergraduate writing are all fundamentally monological. Whether students are focused on the institutional recognition represented by grades, the travails of finding one's voice, or other goals that might be furthered by effective composition, they remain unaware that writing is not and cannot be private.[2] Rather, the kind of writing required of college students always involves an awareness of at least two consciousnesses: that of the writer and that of the implied reader.[3]

I am afraid my explanation sounded ferociously theoretical or phenomenological, however, and was not the sort of pragmatic advice the English major was seeking as she thought about how best to improve her own writing and that of her high school students. Nonetheless, I believe an awareness of the characteristics and ramifications of the kind of consciousness lying at the heart of successful undergraduate prose provides the key both to

understanding what distinguishes college-level writing from other forms of composition and to articulating why learning to write at the college level is vital to all areas of communication, analysis, and self-comprehension.

In order to become clear about college writing, we need to recognize that the process of acquiring the dialogic consciousness necessary to successful undergraduate prose cannot begin until *after* students have learned the rules of basic composition. Precollege writing courses focused on issues of mechanical competency do not require the same dialogic focus and, for this reason, are best regarded as epistemologically distinct from college composition classes.[4] Although their work is predicated on the prior completion of such learning, teachers of college-level writing must do something much more complex than instructing students to follow rules. In addition to concerns related to formal correctness, college-level composition teachers need to bring their students to recognize that the desire to be understood requires us to find ourselves in relation to the purposes and needs of the reader, who must serve as a partner in shaping our language. These were the first two steps of recursive writing that the English major had taken for herself when writing letters in high school.

Whatever its topic or aim, the essential feature of composition confronting all thoughtful undergraduates is that it establishes a real human relationship. In this sense, all writing is inescapably social. Consequently, how the student accepts or avoids responsibility for clarifying the shape and content of the writing relationship is simultaneously an ethical and an epistemological matter. That is to say that good writing is an issue not only of what the student knows but also of how the student chooses to live the knowledge that forms of thought always entail forms of life, and that both must be shared if they are to be meaningful. As Richard Lanham writes in *Revising Prose*, a book I continue to draw from when teaching, "this is why we worry so much about bad prose. It signifies incoherent people, failed social relationships" (64).[5]

When student writing does fail, it is most often because, unable to break free of the bewitchment of self-concern, the writer does not sufficiently respect the reader. Care for those with whom

we find ourselves connected is not simply a social value, it is also an intellectual virtue necessary for undergraduate writers wanting to perform at the college level. J. Hillis Miller clarifies the tension between care for others and narcissism toward the self when, in *The Ethics of Reading,* he argues, "respect is properly the conception of a worth which thwarts my self-love" (17). Hillis Miller goes on to maintain that respect requires me to recognize and incorporate a necessity or law that originates from beyond the narrowly conceived self which, nonetheless, takes it up as its own and is thereby transformed. If students hope to learn what college writing has to teach, they must work at just such a respect-based self-transformation. More specifically, they must develop the critical capacity to read their own prose from the perspective of their audience in a way that puts the needs of the reader on an equal footing with the needs of the writer. This, I think, is an insight toward which most strong undergraduate writers are groping, but it is difficult to develop in isolation.

Such reasoning suggests that college writing proper begins whenever an undergraduate takes the first consequential step from self to other on the grounds of care for one's audience. This is best done by opening oneself to the fact that meaning does not *belong* to the writer; it *unfolds* in the shared space of acknowledgment between the reader and the writer. Effective communication depends on readers recognizing themselves in the way they were already comprehended by the writer who prepared the page before them. Naturally, the writer must first have accurately anticipated this self-recognition by the reader.

The underlying dynamic between the writer and reader indicates that the basic coherence of compositional advice such as "understand your audience," or "clarify the importance of your argument" is poorly grasped if understood exclusively in terms of *techniques* designed to secure institutional recognition, to further individual expression, or to achieve private aims. Although it requires considerable effort to do so, such counsel is better viewed as being rooted in the confounding logic of intersubjectivity. In this logic, *mastery* may prove indistinguishable from *subjection to necessity,* and freedom may best be realized through self-constraint. Such apparent paradoxes bring us before the problem that often leads to college writing being described poorly or

not at all: intersubjective logic cannot be articulated without a conceptual apparatus that most students find baffling. Students and teachers working to develop a natural and convincing prose voice are therefore understandably reluctant to embrace an arcane description of what they are trying to do. But to avoid working through the interpersonal complexities of undergraduate composition is, in a significant sense, to miss both the point of college writing and one of education's most important opportunities.

The primary reason intersubjective logic so often eludes our prosaic grasp is that it is endlessly recursive. As Gregory Bateson has argued, recursive systems are found in most self-shaping processes—especially those involving communication and information dissemination (*Angels Fear* 161; *Mind and Nature* 182–84). Essentially, recursion is a form of self-governing, circular causality found in the feedback loops at the core of all self-directing systems. Examples of these might include university governance, college composition, and even—one hopes—the development of individual character. However, the circular causality of recursion cannot be adequately represented by traditional linear logic, and the paradoxes that result when the latter attempts to map the former have remained a mainstay of philosophical reflection and vexation since Epimenides grappled with the puzzle of the Cretan liar.[6] Nonetheless, if students are to write successfully at the college level, they must, at a minimum, develop an understanding of the recursive role of the writer in intersubjective terms.

This means students have to find a way to conceptualize the writer not on the basis of the private self, but, rather, as one pole of a relationship. Inasmuch as the theory of logical types teaches that no set can include (or exclude) itself as a member of that set, the process of cultivating this understanding also obliges students to negotiate a transition between logical levels of discourse.[7] The role of a writer connecting with a reader, in other words, cannot be fully represented from within the writer/reader relationship. Instead, students must adopt a third position, one capable of embracing both poles from somewhere outside the writer/reader dyad. Ideally, this third position will be modeled for the student by the teacher whenever the latter acts as a *critical reader*. In the context of composition, critical readers work to align and de-

velop the relationship between the writer and the implied reader by cultivating a greater awareness of how the role of each shapes the other.

The moment students accept the role of critical reader of their own prose, they begin to transform the dyad of writer and implied reader in the direction of a self-overcoming dialectic, the aim of which is to return to and more effectively grapple with its point of origin.[8] This recursive role is not easy to undertake, however. It is complicated by at least two considerations. First, it has to coordinate a minimum of three consciousnesses—those of the writer, the implied reader, and the critical reader. Second, as has already been mentioned, it has to coordinate these perspectives by bridging at least two logical levels required by the process of composition. One level is that of the writer presenting a case. The other level is that of the critical reader undertaking a double description of that presentation from the perspectives of both the writer and the implied reader. Because the recursive character of this process makes it difficult to model and to discuss, most students need to be guided through the experience of self-revision by seasoned teachers. But even if our students thereby encounter the recursivity of college writing at first hand, they are not well served unless they are also given the conceptual tools to begin thinking about the meaning and potential of that experience.

I would argue that the recursive moment of critical reading ought to be more fully articulated both in our conversations with undergraduates and in our composition classrooms because it represents the pivot on which the ethical and epistemological importance of college writing turns. Through recursive revision, undergraduates can take a more conscious level of responsibility for the way they engage the surrounding environment. If taken seriously, critical reading and revision thereby helps students understand that we live in a world of relationships rather than operating on a field of things. It does this by positioning them to more reflectively construct the social world we hold in common and to recognize the extent to which college writing is ultimately an act of self-composition. Unfortunately, my discussions with undergraduates, instructors, and administrators indicate this is an insight that has not yet arrived in many of our classrooms and educational policy decisions.

Because, at its best, writing is an act of declaring ourselves and our connections with a larger scheme of things, writing is or ought to be about life and our place in it. From my perspective, there is no more important intellectual work college students can do. I am concerned, though, that many features of the university system (like the trend toward responsibility-centered management, the adoption of the instrumental languages of business at the expense of the self-reflective idioms of art and the humanities, and the sometimes reductionist field-coverage principle that shapes academic professional life) complicate any attempt to position college writing to do this important work. If becoming clear about your relationships to a larger world (which only emerges through those relationships) is a fundamental feature of college writing, it would be helpful if the university provided a model for such effort by exercising a firmer grasp of its own structure and motivations. I believe, though, that we seldom achieve clarity about ourselves. This necessarily presents obstacles for teachers and students alike, while at the same time demonstrating that even senior administrators can and should continue to learn from the college writing classroom.

Notes

1. See *Varieties of Religion Today*, especially pages 79–86. See also *Sources of the Self*, especially pages 368–90.

2. The best known and most powerful arguments against the possibility of private language are to be found in Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein's key insight for college-level writing is that competence in communication requires one to engage the forms of life that provide the context for all collective understanding. Wittgenstein makes this point when he notes that "to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life" (8). Without entering into or, at a minimum, imagining a shared life within which communication can unfold, there can be no meaningful exchange or mutual comprehension. As Wittgenstein observes, "It is what human beings *say* that is true or false; and they agree on the *language* they use. This is not agreement in opinions but in forms of life" (88).

3. My point of departure for thinking about the implied reader is Wolfgang Iser's argument that the implied reader is encoded by the writer

through the strategic positioning of "gaps" in the text that the reader is invited to fill. The writer, in other words, offers the reader an interpretive project or set of projects to be completed in collaboration with the writer's formative design. See Iser's *The Implied Reader* and *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. See also Umberto Eco's related construct of the *model reader* in *The Role of the Reader*. For a useful overview of thinkers critical of Iser's position, see Jonathan Culler's *On Deconstruction*, pp. 73–78.

4. My sense of the dialogic draws heavily on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and his related concepts of polyphony, carnival, and literary architectonics. Bakhtin, in turn, drew on the writing of Dostoevsky, for whom the dialogic was roughly synonymous with consciousness. As Bakhtin comments, "Dostoevsky could hear dialogic relationships everywhere, in all manifestations of conscious and intelligent human life; where consciousness began, there dialogue began for him as well" (40). Consciousness, in short, never belongs to one person in isolation. It always exists on the border between a self and an other. This, I believe, is a foundational lesson to be learned and applied by students of college-level writing.

5. Stanley Cavell makes an excellent related point when he observes, "we are endlessly separate, for *no* reason. But then we are answerable for everything that comes between us; if not for causing it then for continuing it; if not for denying it then for affirming it; if not for it then to it" (369). From this perspective, college writing requires undergraduates to focus on their relationship to their readers and on how this relationship has been miscarried by the writer.

6. See especially pages 54–60 of *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. Bateson there argues that, because it ignores the reality of time, formal logic offers an incomplete model of how causality actually operates. As he observes, though, "we use the same words to talk about logical sequences and about sequences of cause and effect. . . . When the sequences of cause and effect become circular (or more complex than circular), then the description or mapping of those sequences onto timeless logic becomes self-contradictory" (*Mind and Nature* 54). Bateson discusses these issues in connection with Epimenides and the paradox of the Cretan liar on p. 108–9.

Bateson developed his theory of recursion near the end of his career in order to avoid the pitfalls of logical paradox and to think more effectively about ecology, systems design, and cybernetics. As Bateson made clear in his posthumously published collection of essays entitled *A Sacred Unity: Further Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, recursion is a form of reflexivity or circular causality through which things return "all the time to bite their own tails and control their own beginnings" (191). I

believe college-level writing is distinguished precisely by its insistence that students undertake the endlessly iterative and paradoxical process of meeting themselves in the act of marshalling their own origins.

7. Whitehead and Russell developed the theory of logical types in the *Principia Mathematica* in order to solve and understand the source of a number of paradoxes in symbolic logic and other forms of thinking concerned with aggregates. As they write in the introduction to that work, "it is believed that the theory of types, as set forth in what follows, leads to the avoidance of contradictions and to the detection of the precise fallacy which has given rise to them" (Russell, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell* 161).

Influenced by the efforts of Russell and Whitehead throughout the *Principia Mathematica* to demonstrate that we must employ a theory of logical types if we wish to avoid logical contradictions, both Ludwig Wittgenstein and Gregory Bateson developed distinctive understandings of the relationship of language and meaning to the contexts in which they were produced. Wittgenstein focused on "forms of life," and Bateson focused on "ecology." Both men disagreed, however, with the ultimate aim pursued by Whitehead and Russell, and concluded that the goal of eliminating all paradox from human communication was illusory. Drawing on the theory of logical types in light of the considerations urged by Wittgenstein and Bateson, it would appear that a key lesson of college-level writing involves *context sensitivity*. Students need to develop an understanding that what makes perfect sense in one frame of reference may prove to be complete gibberish in another.

8. Students of Hegel will here recognize the ternary scheme of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, the dialectical process whereby a thesis is preserved, transcended, and cancelled in a synthesis which can serve in its turn as a new thesis. The clearest explanation Hegel provides of his dialectic can be found in his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, the first part of which is *The Logic*. See section 11 (pp. 15–16), where Hegel writes, "to see that thought in its very nature is dialectical, and that, as understanding, it must fall into contradiction—the negative of itself—will form one of the main lessons of logic" (*Hegel's Logic* 15). Please also see section 48 (p. 76–79), where Hegel discusses what he sees as shortcomings in Kant's use of theses and antitheses to model the antinomies of reason. Finally, see section 81 (p. 115–19), where Hegel observes, "wherever there is movement, wherever there is life, wherever anything is carried into effect in the actual world, there Dialectic is at work" (116). For a description of the dialectical process that anticipates many elements of Bateson's model of recursivity, see page 10 of Hegel's preface to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Regarding the dialectic through which truth unfolds itself in the interplay between thought and the material world, Hegel there writes: "It is the process of its own

becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning; and only by being worked out to its end, is it actual" (*The Phenomenology of Spirit* 10). Readers interested in the secondary literature treating Hegel's dialectical method might begin by consulting *A Hegel Dictionary*, pp. 81–83.

Works Cited

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984.

Bateson, Gregory. *A Sacred Unity: Further Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

———. *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton, 2002.

Bateson, Gregory, and Mary Catherine Bateson. *Angels Fear: Towards an Epistemology of the Sacred*. New York: Bantam Books, 1988.

Cavell, Stanley. *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979.

Culler, Jonathan. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982.

Eco, Umberto. *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1979.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Logic* (part 1 of *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*). Trans. William Wallace. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975.

———. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.

Inwood, Michael. *A Hegel Dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980.

———. *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose from Bunyan to Beckett*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974.

Lanham, Richard. *Revising Prose*. 4th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.

Miller, J. Hillis. *The Ethics of Reading: Kant, de Man, Eliot, Trollope, James, and Benjamin.* The Wellek Library lectures at the University of California, Irvine. New York: Columbia UP, 1989.

Russell, Bertrand. *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell, 1903–1959.* Ed. Robert E. Egner and Lester E. Denonn. London: Allen & Unwin, 1961.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989.

———. *Varieties of Religion Today.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations.* 2nd ed. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1953.

Whitehead, Alfred North, and Bertrand Russell. *Principia Mathematica.* 2nd ed. 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1925–27.