Transforming Perspectives in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education

A Dialogue

Laura Formenti and Linden West
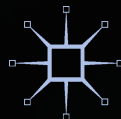
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"A beautiful work in which Laura Formenti and Linden West invite us on a compelling pilgrimage of multiple perspectives of transformative learning. Rooted in auto/biographical narrative and engaging dialogical methods, the authors quickly draw us into a journey that takes us off the academic beaten path by, paradoxically, embracing well-established intellectual traditions, such as philosophy, art, and spirituality. Together we enter into worlds of light and height as well as darkness and depth.

Through their masterful representation and use of these traditions, the authors create for us a subjective journey that increasingly illuminates what it objectively means to more fully grasp and live the transformative dimensions of learning and adult education. It is a storied journey in which we weave in and out of the authors' lives and experiences, their relationship and dialogue with one another, the lives of their research participants, and the powerful ideas that have guided and informed their pilgrimage.

A much welcomed and needed exploration of one of the most generative concepts in adult learning. After reading this book, you can't help but think and feel differently both about transformative learning as a theoretical concept and yourself as an active participate in this dialogue. It's a must read!"

—Professor John M. Dirkx, *Michigan State University, USA*

"This book is an engagement in transformative pilgrimage learning! It takes the reader on a journey that bridges the perspectives of continents, and keeps the reader walking and thinking, moving with soul, while connecting imagination with intellect, body with spirit. It keeps the reader in a constant dialogue or 'metalogue' with/between one's own self and the co-authors, in a ponderous transformative learning journey exploring the relationship of ideas grounded in ancient landscapes and European cathedrals as they continue to unfold in the technological age of electronic billboards and pop culture. Peppered with story, philosophy, and a sense of humor, it explores the fact that in spite of the 'pilgrim's progress' of technology, the best of the transformative pilgrimage learning journey is in our capacity as story tellers, wisdom seekers, who create art and meaning by embracing the paradox of life in the midst of death, wisdom

in the midst of foolishness. It is a must read for adult educators and lifelong learners interested in the transformative power of pilgrimage learning."

—Professor Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Penn State University, USA*

Laura Formenti · Linden West

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For all our friends—in Europe and a wider world—in the community of scholars called the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA), Life History and Biographical Research Network. They have contributed greatly to our understanding of self, our lives, learning and the hope we call education.

Preface

This book will make a traveller of thee, if by its counsel thou wilt ruled be… John Bunyan, (1678). *The Pilgrim's Progress.* Penguin Classics, 1963: p. 4.

And yet, today as yesterday, and hopefully as tomorrow, unceasingly on the brink of catastrophe, humanity keeps being held together by this very same, almost invisible, thin thread: «know thyself», so that the sun may keep rising. Daniela Boccassini (2017), *On the Wings of the Night: Jung, Dante and Individuation.*

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better…
Fail again. Better again. Or better worse. Fail worse again. Still worse again. Till sick for good. Throw up for good. Samuel Beckett (1983/2009). *Worstward Ho*, In *Company etc.* Dirk Van Dyke (Ed). London: Faber and Faber, p. 81.

The quotations from Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Daniela Boccassini and Samuel Beckett express some of the spirit underlying our book on transformation, transformative learning and adult education. The metaphor shaping the text is of pilgrimage; we have dialogued together, as well as with diverse others, when walking our way through different theories and perspectives on learning, formation and transformation.

We sought to interrogate the role of adult education in a world that often seems 'on the brink of catastrophe' and to see if the human capacity for learning—including our own—is still of value in holding humanity together.

Bunyan and Dante wrote of journeys into infernal and purgatorial landscapes, where eventually people can find their way to some earthly paradise or Celestial City. We might label such perspectives, in contemporary terms, psychological or spiritual narratives of transformation that illuminate how difficult journeys can be. The two authors' writing suggests deeper, more demanding processes that tend to be the case in contemporary discussion of lifelong learning or transformative adult education. They are marketed as the means for updating our skills in a highly competitive world; as a passport, perhaps, to relative material abundance, social status and 'success' defined by reference to getting a degree, alongside a new BMW or smartphone. Or to individual achievement and understanding but at the neglect of collective well-being and the environment. The question is then begged as to what learning and education are actually for?

The literature of learning and education also privileges cognition in any shifts of self or collective understanding. Mind matters most as the learner makes informed and reflective decisions to act on her insights, and to transcend situational, emotional and intellectual constraints. Transformative learning, in this perspective, is about our intellects exposing social and cultural embeddedness and oppression and taken for granted assumptions. While we think our intellects are important, transformation, we suggest, involves deeper, whole body, heartfelt as well as spiritual work: knowing ourselves better might include finding the courage to engage with and learn from the other and otherness, not least in ourselves. Pilgrimage conveys, we suggest, something of the spirit required for such learning: it is about taking time, time out and an openness to varied experience as well as allowing a journey to unfold. We find landmarks on the way, meaningful as well as challenging, and will meet other pilgrims and perspectives. We can realise there is much to learn from different cultures in a kind of nomadic existence. We have met various pilgrims in writing this book, people similar and also different from us, who struggle with big questions about being

human and the well-lived life, in a world of fragility, greed, violence and paranoia. Much like, in fact, Dante's fourteenth century Florence or Bunyan's seventeenth century England; or for that matter Beckett's twentieth century Europe. The pilgrims include educators who have sought answers and transformation in collective struggle as well as in personal journeys of individuation and psychological integration. In all such work, projections about the evil other can be returned to where they belong, in our own psyches or cultures, which then enables us to relate better to others and otherness in the entirety of our lives. Or at least, there is the possibility of doing so.

We seem to be living in a world teetering on the brink of catastrophe. Teetering or struggling for balance can constitute the human condition, across time and cultures. But Bunyan and Dante encourage us on our journeys. Our book, at the risk of pretentiousness, has a similar aim: to invite you, our reader, into dialogue, to share struggles, occasional despair, doubt, even failure, alongside moments of beauty, joy and truth; and to cultivate the determination to keep on keeping on. Our dialogue is part of a quest to illuminate the prerequisites for self-knowledge, as Jung would have understood it; and to reconnect this with historical values in adult education in struggles for transformational social change. This at a moment where conversation and civility in public life often get drowned out by the beating drums of fascism and xenophobia, or in calls to violence and in the hate discourse of social media. Denigration of the other and trivialisation of complexity seem virulent. Adult education, in many countries, including our own—Britain and Italy—once represented a more hopeful public space where conversation, dialogue and conviviality were nurtured, even across profound difference. But adult education of a liberal and popular kind has weakened while the idea of public space—what the ancient Greeks called the agora—is shrunk in a privatised world.

One problem with transformative learning or adult education, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, is that they can require too many evening meetings. Too much effort, commitment, and too much of our time. There is pessimism stalking our book alongside a spirit of keeping on keeping on. Some question the quality of much so-called education in a liquid world where all that is solid melts away, and the basic preconditions

for self-formation are fragile. The sociologist Zigmunt Bauman writes of the human need for stable families and communities and for forms of education offering disciplined access to worthwhile knowledge, accumulated and tested over time. This is an education taking time: to prepare, digest, savour, enjoy, challenge and which, in turn, challenges us to the core. But in liquid modernity the menu often consists of junk food or short-term projects, under the banner of lifelong learning and even higher education. We are encouraged to be flexible in this culture of freneticism and struggle for survival. We are like hunters, in harsh terrain, desperate for the next kill (a new job, a degree or partner), and the bliss this promises; but the feeling does not last, and the fear of going without, or of being excluded and second best, continually drives us on. Some give up the hunt altogether, and escape into forms of addiction, consumerism, or maybe Facebook. Therein lies danger, as our Facebook data are mined and our demons manipulated by the new digital behemoths.

Bauman is not alone in his pessimism: Sigmund Freud was also pessimistic about the human condition. He wrote of our resistance to self-knowledge. Facing the unconscious, as he saw it, was a difficult business, while closing our eyes to our capacity for violence and even barbarity was seductive. To be fair both to Freud and Bauman, they, like many others, encourage us and offer insights, often precious and profound, to help us on our way. There are many committed men and women who have dreamt of a better world or thought about the meaning of the well-lived life. Their voices need to be heard: they talk of adult education as a microcosm of a better social order; or of soul work; yet others of aesthetics, and why experiencing beauty or truth, however fleeting and contentious, is crucial to the good pilgrimage. There are writers like Gregory Bateson who enable us to see the big ecological picture, of which we are only a part. When we pollute Lake Eerie, he suggested, our psyches and souls are polluted too. We end our book by reference to the spiritual, even transcendental aspects of transformative learning. We dialogue with a sister pilgrim, from the world of adult education, and explore how heaven and hell might lie within, rather than being up there or down below. Transcendence is possible in the good adult education group, in a spirit of democratic,

dialogical learning and self/other recognition. Hell, on the other hand, can possess us at diabolical moments when dialogue breaks down and we might seek to destroy the other. We can fail as pilgrims. Samuel Beckett's (2009) words, or some of them, from *Worstward Ho* might then be quoted to inspire us on: 'Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better' (p. 81). These particular words have become a mantra in places like Silicon Valley, but the whole text offers a bleaker, more enigmatic vision of human life. Here words fail, and there are meaningless voids. Beckett might also be suggesting that we embrace failure rather than seeing it as a necessary step to eventual success. Interestingly, Dante was an inspiration for Beckett, and he wrote of the need to surrender craving of any kind and allow the divine to work within. Beckett's pessimism was forged in the light of the Second World War and Nietzsche's death of God. But several writers (Van Hulle 2009; Schlottman 2018) suggest hope remains in Beckett's work. All is not lost, or hopeless, there are faint glimpses of something better. In our terms, hope is found in embracing failure, maybe ugliness and despair too, but alongside beauty, truth and new ways of seeing. Paradoxically, the messy and contradictory nature of experience opens us to transformative possibility, however fragile, uneven and humbling a process.

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Landscapes of Transforming Perspectives

Introducing 'Trans-formation'

In this opening chapter, we share with you our overlapping and distinct reasons for writing this book and for engaging in such a challenging, imaginative, eclectic, critical, deeply personal as well as an emotional dialogue, on a topic that frustrates, inspires, intrigues and troubles us. The book is the outcome of a kind of pilgrimage involving encounters with an eclectic body of people and literature on transformation and transformative learning; and of an effort to think afresh and challenge some old binaries, between feeling and cognition, the sacred and the social, conscious and unconscious life. We suggest that understanding and engaging in transformative processes must be deeply rooted in real life experience and an engagement with many perspectives. It requires the capacity to listen to our own bodies and their manifold ways of perceiving and knowing, beyond the obvious and visible.

We want to build a more holistic and richer perspective on the conditions in which humans might flourish. Unfortunately, holistic is one of those words, like transformation and transformative learning, carrying the risk of cliché. So, we attempt to give all these words renewed life, or

maybe to discard them. Our pilgrimage involved walking and conversing together and finding time and space to enter difficult terrain. We had many conversations with diverse pilgrims on the journey; people like us who have wrestled with ideas about transformation, transformative learning, education and the well-being of individuals as well as whole societies. Pilgrims (they might not appreciate the label) like Jack Mezirow, Dante Alighieri, Sabina Spielrein, Axel Honneth, Paulo Freire, Marie-Christine Josso, Zygmunt Bauman, Patricia Cranton, Gregory Bateson, Donald Winnicott, Shelly Sclater, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Lea Melandri, Adriana Cavarero, Antonio Gramsci, Danilo Dolci, Libby Tisdell, John Dirkx, Carla Pensa, Raymond Williams, Deborah Britzman, Richard Henry Tawney, Anna Lorenzetto, Sofia Corradi, as well as others. This is some list and ours was some journey.

We wonder what gets in the way of profounder forms of change in the socio-cultural, economic, political, psychological, spiritual and ecological worlds we inhabit. We consider both external and internal worlds, the social and psychological, and their interplay, and then challenge the idea of a clear boundary between them. What lies 'out there' shapes the internal world, while all that we know is a product of our perception. We ask the question of how much we ever 'transform'. Is this a kind of illusion, even a marketing trope, in a world where consumerist values are strong and transformation is ubiquitously marketed? How much are we really transformed by acquiring a new car, a mobile phone, a new outfit, or even a degree programme? Do we completely leave behind the infant, the child, the adolescent and the young man or woman, as we age, or do we entirely transcend our foibles and conceits? What remains, in transformation, of earlier identities and selves? Perhaps we learn to cultivate different qualities of relationship to aspects of ourselves, as well as to the symbolic world, as part of a never complete struggle to become an adult.

Our pilgrimage, week after week, word after word, was like entering a complex and changing landscape. Our path was made by walking, and by walking we become aware of the richness and complexity of the world. We knew that we wanted to engage with different perspectives, on the way, to compose an eclectic roadmap of transformation. Perspectives are dialogically explored, across the chapters, as landmarks

we paused at for a while, grateful for a heritage of good ideas to sustain the quest: from critical rationality, soul work, social struggle, aesthetic representation, psychological individuation, aesthetics, and spiritual and religious insight. We contemplate, at each of these landmarks, pessimistic as well as optimistic readings of human lives and transformative possibility; and we use art, literature, history and the imaginal, in diverse forms, to illuminate our themes. We frequently draw on our auto/biographical narrative research and writing to engage with the stories of many learners we have worked with; they speak, we suggest, to the angst and possibilities of our contemporary world. Other voices and stories are absent: our quest is limited by who we are, the experiences we have had, the languages we speak, and the hidden perspectives we enact.

We argue, at the heart of the book, that transformation, and the learning required for its realisation, is a lifelong, lifewide, never complete quest for meaning, truth, agency, and selfhood (or soul). The quest encompasses the relationships in which we are embedded and the stories available in our families and wider cultures. We bring to the quest our parlous relationship to the planet, which many of us recognise, even if we choose not to think too much about it. Maybe it is too late to accept that we are part of a whole (Gregory Bateson suggested that when Lake Eerie is polluted, our souls are polluted too. Perhaps the pollution has gone too far). Nonetheless, our struggle remains one of connecting souls and ecologies, and other binaries of mind and body, self and soul, the social and psychological, emotion and cognition, ourselves and others, humans and the 'natural' world with its diverse species. The journey encompasses the Delphic imperative to know ourselves, and to take care, too, as Michel Foucault reminded us (1988). Selves, families, groups, cultures, landscapes, animals and every species are interdependent.

We tread on the uncertain terrain of what is just, good, true and beautiful; of the need for recognition of others as well as self; of strengths alongside fragility and weakness. And of the benefits of being nomads, open to diverse experiences and cultures. Nomadism might be a problem—citizens of the world and of nowhere, rootless, without grounding. Or it might just be the prerequisite for knowing ourselves better, because we learn to see ourselves through the eye of the other.

We engage with an existential imperative to wrench meaning from the darkest of moments, while being able to let go and give space to others, and otherness, as we get older. Transformation, if anything, is about engagement and letting go, action and contemplation, thinking and surrender, self and other, in dynamic interplay.

Words like love, beauty and truth are often absent from the academy, where we spend much of our time. They are forgotten or refused admission, because they are considered a modernist illusion or too imprecise for serious science. Truth as a theoretical project, abstracting ourselves and seeing from Olympian heights, and then potentially objectifying reality, is an old troubling story. It is found in Marxism, sociology, psychoanalysis or even Kant. It has been challenged to the core in postmodern and feminist perspectives. But relativism brings us to Donald Trump (or Salvini), as the outcome of a world where anything counts, even obvious lies (Biesta 2018). Love and beauty are often considered relative too. From a scientific perspective, they are insusceptible to precise definition, operationalization or measurement. However, we use them, tentatively, to re-vitalise and re-enchant our engagement with learning. We celebrate words like passion, wisdom and hope too. We bring dying and death into the equation, despite the Western fetishising of youth and the denial of inevitable, final endings.

As academics we write about professional, higher and adult education, as well as the problematic concept of lifelong learning. We value the idea and hermeneutic possibility of transformation and transformative learning while feeling dissatisfied by overly linear, acritical, and excessively rational perspectives. A more eclectic understanding of transformation, learning and education can enrich our theories. Transformation is overused in common discourse, including in education, psychology, research as well as advertising. It is most often focused on style rather than substance, appearance rather than depth, consumerist desire rather than asking profounder, existential, psychological, social, ecological and even spiritual questions. This is the territory we enter, and the pathway we seek to sculpt.

All of which comes with a health warning: the jihadi, the storm trooper, and the religious zealot talk of transformation, too. And they force us to consider its normative dimensions. The journey towards

fundamentalism (and pilgrimage can be a part of this) has finally to do with the closure of perspective and experiential possibility, seduced by the fantasy of absolute truth, purity, or maybe paradise, at the point of arrival. The Other—the West, the Jew, the Muslim or the bourgeois—is constructed as the enemy. There is a process of psychological splitting and projection at work, where disliked parts of ourselves are denied and unconsciously projected into the other. Hybridity is feared, while life-long learning is stillborn. We seek a more open-ended perspective, to help us with less destructive, more inclusive journeys.

The concept of learning, like transformation, is open to many inter-pretations. Peter Jarvis (2010) locates learning within a dynamic of internal and wider worlds. Learners internalise and process a cul-ture. This can be read passively, or dynamically, as people are made by and makers of their cultural worlds. In the first steps of our journey, we think about learning as receiving a culture, through the mediation of many others, in families, schools, communities and wider societies, including social media. However, we take this to be too passive a per-spective and, like Piaget (1937), are sensitive to how learners actively shape their world from the outset. Learning in early life is a subtler, more interactive and potentially transformative process than the idea of socialisation conveys. In studies of young infants and their interactions with prime care givers, and therapists, transitional and transformational spaces open, when the infant feels seen, recognised and able to look and see in turn. Learning is profoundly emotional and intersubjective, as well as cognitive. Cognition however is often privileged at the expense of other dimensions like experience, relationship, emotion, aesthetics, imagination, ethics, spirituality, and practice.

The distinction between learning as acquisition and learning as a dynamic of inner and outer worlds (Illeris 2014) is at the heart of many discussions about adult learning, shaped by wider, values-based and normative perspectives on what it is to be human. Gert Biesta (2011, 2014), for instance, distinguishes between socialisation, in which chil-dren become part of an existing socio-political order, and subjectifica-tion, which is to do with learning from and in, not about experience. It has to do with the quality of relational space between people in families, schools and more widely, and the extent to which this encourages and

sustains more open, agentic, imaginative and reflexive selves, learning in respectful dialogue, who are encouraged in turn to question authority and received wisdom. This is an idea we meet many times on our pilgrimage.

Consumerism

Our discussion of transformation encompasses the here and now of contemporary culture, where desire is mass produced and transformation marketed. Learning and education themselves can be thought of as products or commodities, valued for their exchange value in accessing a new job or desirable lifestyle. The barely concealed persuaders of the advertising world and digital media are perpetually at work, encouraging people to believe that to 'Buy a new car, re-decorate your house, replace your wardrobe, have a face lift', or even, ironically, 'take a new course for skill upgrading' are ways to transform ourselves. There are ubiquitous images of this at airports: buy the latest Samsung or Apple phone, sign a new insurance contract, buy a ticket for an amazing cruise, and you will be transported into a quasi-sexual, glamorous, transformative fantasy.

Consumerism is pervasive in educational settings, often unquestioned and under-interrogated. Universities are sold for their potential to offer golden keys to the labour market or to enhance our lifetime's earning. Raymond Williams, the British cultural theorist and adult educator, warned that the advertising agents hold a reductive view of people and their potentialities, as 'masses' to be broken down into demographics, to be sold a range of products. Expensively educated people were 'now in the service of the most brazen money-grabbing exploitation of the inexperience of ordinary people' (Williams 1989, p. 6). 'The old cheapjack is still there in the market… he thinks of his victims as a slow ignorant crowd. The new cheapjack lives in offices with contemporary *décor*, using scraps of linguistics, psychology, and sociology to influence what he thinks of as the mass mind' (Williams 1989, p. 7). S/he may nowadays be employed by Silicon Valley or in organisations like Cambridge Analytica, using big data and psychological profiling to sell products,

illusions and even political parties and referendum campaigns. S/he exists too in the marketing departments of universities, and in our own heads. We are all salespersons now. Today we have 'influencers' and 'bloggers', doing the same but with far less understanding, since they—like us—depend on the algorithm. They do not even need to know how to influence 'the mass', because the system feeds them with all the information they need.

Consumerism objectifies and reduces our humanity: we become units of consumption, calculating machines intent on self-gratification. Material things—clothes, cars, houses, phones or degrees—promise to transform our lives. This is a rhetoric profoundly antithetical to the human struggle for transformation, as represented in the best of educational and religious as well as political thought. We are mortal, fragile creatures who easily get out of depth, or over-reach. Like Icarus reaching for the sun, encouraged by his father, in the Greek myth, we can fall calamitously short in our hubris. Maybe transformation is about recognising limitations alongside our potential for grandiosity. Transformative learning might also be a journey towards what the ancients called wisdom (Fraser 2018; Tisdell and Swartz 2011).

Contrary-wise, perhaps, we insist that new perspectives are urgently required to tackle the many crises of our world (think of the 2008 financial crisis or ecological fragility). We urgently require thinking, agentic, caring, empathic citizens in tune with the problems of the world, rather than 'consumers'. As adults, we take decisions, have care responsibilities, make projects; so why is education often reduced to acquiring competencies and skills? We get confused as to what counts as knowledge, assuming its equivalence to what is easily measured. We want to suggest, instead, that transformation entails fundamental challenges to the givens of whole systems; and interrogating the imaginative maps which 'story' us as people, colonise our inner and outer worlds; maps drawn by those who exploit our inexperience, in the name of populist politics or money making, and even in the name of 'education'. We engage with these difficult challenges on our pilgrimage.

We should say a brief word about the methodology shaping the book. We ground our journey in auto/biographical and narrative enquiry and in dialogue between ourselves and others. This is meant

to be engaging for you, the reader, as well as ourselves. We have written the remainder of the chapter, and other parts of the book, in a personal, biographical style. We dialogue about transformation in our own lives, and among those we have researched and taught. We have a 'metalogue'—a metaphoric dialogue—at the end of the chapter, and two more elsewhere in the book. This is a form of imaginative conversation used by Gregory Bateson (1972, 1979; Bateson and Bateson 1987) to celebrate 'thinking in terms of stories' (1979, p. 14); a way of recognising potential patterns in and beyond specific meanings. In a metalogue, 'the structure of the conversation is relevant to the same subject itself' (1972, p. 1). Metalogues enable us to grasp how perspectives may viscerally shape our ideas of beauty, for instance, and how we can be challenged about this. How to remain open to dialogue, when confronted by difference and the need to learn from the other, is a constant struggle.

Our dialogue includes difficulties in changing what we think and who we are. Of how, like everyone else, we were born into vulnerability and dependence on others for survival. It is difficult to separate from the other, in earliest experience, from who we have been, or from a way of seeing. It can be difficult as an adult, let alone as a child. We are vulnerable and mortal, and loss, even tragedy, invade our lives, and often we wish to hide away, rather than learn from experience. Transformation is neither wholly positive nor negative, or ultimately definitive, or necessarily everlasting. To develop a subtler sensibility, we weave into the pilgrimage very personal, familial, as well as socio-cultural and political perspectives. Of how we were dis-embedded from tradition and heritage in our own biographical crises and quests for meaning and substance. Dialogue illuminates our cultural, linguistic, and gendered differences, as well as similarities. This methodological and pedagogical model has a transformative potential in its own right, like pilgrimage. There were times when we got lost, hurt, frustrated and exhilarated, inspired and discouraged in our lives as well as in writing the book. So, it is important at this point to introduce personal motivations driving the book and to reveal more of ourselves in the process.

Laura: My Learning Biography, Life Transitions and the Systemic Perspective

How did I learn to become who I am? Does transformation have any role in my life? I can answer these question by telling a story about my 'learning biography' (Dominicé 2000; Alheit 2009). Narratives have the power to illuminate invisible paths people follow when trying to cope; how we partly invent lives, to build sense and meaning. Narratives compel and shape us. Too much research in education is sanitized and anaesthetized, as if researchers, participants, or readers were disembodied, decontextualised minds. I do not feel like that. I need theory, or over-arching explanatory stories, that are experience-based, embodied, emotionally and ethically satisfying, and practically orientating. Telling my story is—autoethnographically—a way to reflect on the perspectives of meaning I use to interpret my world, my experience, and myself. And how these perspectives have transformed, or not, over time.

One very good reason for researching transformation is that I am living a transition, while the world itself seems in uncertain transition. It could be healthier and safer to think of life as an ongoing transition, rather than an aggregate of disconnected moments. To work biographically enables us to recognise hidden learning processes and their complexity, and to sustain good enough ecological transformations too. My aim, in writing this book, is to interrogate my own epistemology (as defined by Bateson 1977), and to do this in dialogue with Linden. Our differences can bring a deeper reflexivity (depth is produced by binocular vision, see Bateson 1979, pp. 77–79). Learning about learning, dialoguing about dialogue, building perspectives on perspective: this constitutive recursivity is a basic tenet of systemic wisdom, challenging mechanistic views of learning as linear cause-and-effect. My language, my way of thinking and acting, even my life style, have been shaped by systemic ideas, complexity theory and radical constructivism (Watzlawick 1984; Morin 2007; Formenti 2018). I embraced these ideas as a student in psychology: a perspective where interconnection and entanglement are celebrated as features of life.

However, my understanding of such things was initially very intellectual. Now I want to set aside what I 'know', everything I have studied, even beloved theoretical friends and masters, to develop an authentic understanding of (my) life, starting from what is inscribed in my body and soul as well as in my brain. Can we call this a 'transformation'? Maybe. A leading theme in my life is curiosity for hidden rules which inform human action. I studied psychology to understand the workings of (my) mind, because I was interested in how basic beliefs and presuppositions develop.

I remember a course on the Epistemological Antinomies of Contemporary Psychology: it seemed to offer a way out of several dilemmas haunting the discipline, creating disorientation and harsh exchanges among students: subjectivity vs. objectivity, mechanistic vs. humanistic views, realism vs. constructivism, theoretical vs. empirical research, and so on. The imperative was: 'choose where you stand!' Professor Sadi Marhaba (strangely enough, an Indian in Italy) claimed that 'The epistemological tissue of psychology is *ripped*, quite different from the substantially unitary tissue of traditional natural science. In the past, these wounds took and still do take *antinomic* form: given any epistemological problem, *two* solutions are proposed and radically opposed' (Marhaba 1976, p. 29, translation is mine).

Marhaba's words are eloquent: paradigms have often fought for dominance. But over time, some of the dilemmas provoked by warfare seemed to disappear, leaving space for new, more integrated understanding. It was as if such dilemmas express a hidden rule or epistemological imperative. I was always sensitive to polarities (Keeney 1983), which no doubt connects to my highly conflictual parents. Systemic thinking taught me to appreciate opposites, not to fear them, and to make creative compositions. My definition of creativity is about harmonization, synthesis, and mediation. I am not disturbed either by the idea of maintaining difference, or even a gap, and taking care of the edges ('a clean wound heals sooner'), from which new life and ways of seeing can emerge.

I was deeply influenced by Gregory Bateson, who defined epistemology as 'the study of how particular organisms *know, think, and decide*. […] the study of the necessary limits and other characteristics of the

processes of knowing, thinking, and deciding' (Bateson 1979, p. 250). My limits then, as well as achievements, emanate from my natural history as an organism, co-evolving with an environment. I see such co-evolution as material and abstract, theoretical and practical, biological and cultural, individual and collective: dualism does not work in nature, and the logic of inclusion (and) instead of exclusion (or) is a powerful way to heal polarity. Gregory Bateson was horrified—and I was horrified like him—by the lack of wisdom in much human behaviour. He was concerned for the planet and growing economic and political disequilibrium, and at the disconnection and abuses of power in relationships as well as the miscommunication strategies undermining human trust. These ideas had an impact on my imagination: a mix of understanding, exhilaration, but also loss. I lost my innocent, naïve, and utterly positivistic grasp of reality. The epistemology of complexity seized my life.

Bateson suggested that we consider the organism *plus* environment as the evolutionary unit, hence the learning unit. 'We are learning by bitter experience that the organism which destroys its environment destroys itself' (1972, p. 483). The social and biological environment, and our relationships, are modeled on circuits of interaction. The destruction of the other brings our own destruction. I see this frequently in organisations, families, and groups. I meet professionals who think distress in families is dealt with by blaming and controlling parents, giving them instructions, and producing even more distress. When you make the epistemological error of considering one against the other, a family member separate from the family system, a community without its environment, you arrive at war, pollution, and disabling reductionism.

> When you narrow down your epistemology and act on the premise 'What interests me is me, or my organisation, or my species,' you chop off consideration of other loops of the loop structure. You decide that you want to get rid of the by-products of human life and that Lake Erie will be a good place to put them. You forget that the eco-mental system called Lake Erie is a part of your wider eco-mental system – and that if Lake

> Erie is driven insane, its insanity is incorporated in the larger system of your thought and experience. (Bateson 1972, p. 484)

I started to use systemic ideas in family therapy (Boscolo et al. 1987; Burbatti and Formenti 1988), a form of intervention based on complexity and interdependence. 'Psychological problems' are reframed as meaningful actions in context. I liked the idea of fostering better forms of co-existence, in a family, a team, or local community. Maybe this is still about trying to heal conflict between my mother and father. I trusted knowledge as a means to foster systemic transformation: *Hypothesizing*, the topic of my master's thesis, is a tool used by the Milan Associates (Selvini Palazzoli et al. 1980) to gain complex understanding of a family's epistemology. For 16 years working as a systemic family therapist I learned to weave complexity theory into practice, using narration as a form of action. I was in a process of co-evolution with my clients, through ongoing conversations (Anderson 1997), where previous contexts of learning and living, what happened there-and-then, were re-presented in the here-and-now, as levers for change.

Psychotherapy was too partial an answer to my need for orientation and understanding. I was disturbed by linear practices (diagnosis, problem solving, and prescriptions) in the field, and the lack of awareness, tools, or determination, by psychotherapists, to consider the macro-level, challenge larger structures and social determinants. Therapeutic change became problematic, since it confirmed the epistemological errors I was trying to escape from: like linear thinking, control, power, and anatomical dissection. Education, especially adult education, appeared to offer a broader perspective: I was ready to re-think the struggle for change in terms of learning (Formenti 2000).

A more personal reason to distance myself from psychotherapy was the quest for meaning and identity in my own life. I was a professional psychologist, a trainer, an academic, but also a wife, an immigrant worker in Switzerland, and later a mother of two, while completing a Ph.D. I went through processes of learning and unlearning, crises and creative solutions. I felt ill-prepared for this, and uncertain. Intellectual tools were next to useless. It took years to become aware of what transpired. Such as the biographical reasons underlying my first

research study on the construction of adult identity, at the University of Geneva; and in my Ph.D. on biographies in adult education. In 1993 I joined a newly formed research community, the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) and the Life History and Biography Network that now Linden and I jointly convene, with Alan Bainbridge. The network's conferences exposed me to contrast, to new antinomies, perhaps embodied in two men: Peter Alheit and Pierre Dominicé, founders and first conveners of the network, with Agnieszka Bron.

Peter Alheit comes from Northern Europe and sociology. He emphasises how lives are structured, and yet potential sites for what he terms 'biographical learning' or 'biographicity', i.e. the subject's capacity to become a 'social actor' through recognizing the actions of given frameworks and prescriptive knowledge in his/her life. The subject can learn to experience life contexts as malleable and designable, at least to an extent (Alheit 1995; Alheit and Dausien 2000, 2007). Pierre Dominicé represented someone nearer to the Latin, Mediterranean world, where research in education is strongly connected to practice; he used the methodology of learning biographies to cultivate reflexivity and critical knowledge among professionals (Dominicé 1990, 2000, 2007). Alheit's scientific rigour and the need to legitimise biographical and narrative methods in a somewhat sceptical German scientific community, contrasted with Dominicé's practical, political and ethical focus, and the creation of space where biographies could be talked about, shared, considered more deeply and re-edited. Inspired by both Pierre and Peter, my biographical research is participatory, with shared reading and editing of biographies, collaborative critical interrogation, and learning from each other. A form of individual and collective transformation, in short.

Many scholars, mostly women (Bron 1995, 2007; Härnsten 1995; Josso 2000, 2001; Merrill 1999, 2007; Horsdal 2012) were active in the Network, bringing their commitment, critical attitude, and relational sensibilities, to create an impressively articulated map of diverse foci and methodological subtlety. The Network was no two-man business, nevertheless there was a gendered imbalance in power and visibility. This tension was however generative, thanks to the inclusive style

of the Network, especially for a woman like me from the underrepresented South of Europe: I learned to find and use my voice, even if it took time, and experiences of respect and recognition, before I felt legitimate. This theme is crucial for transformation: nobody transforms alone, especially without good enough relationships and anxiety containment. The Life History and Biography Network made a difference, fuelling my motivation and pushing me, later, as a convener, to offer good enough space for others. The enacted values of a research community like this can feed into everyone's learning path: a transformation of context is intertwined with individual transformations. Complexity and systems theory helped me perceive the world as a tangle of individuals, groups, societies, and ecosystems: learning is emergent, at every level, a flux of information shaping new configurations, structures and frames of meaning.

Who am I, besides? How am I becoming? 'I' am 'my own metaphor' (Bateson 1977): by now, I am aware of how much I embody and enact, at every step, my learning biography, and shape the contexts where I live, as much as being shaped by them. I need to act responsively and respectfully to 'the pattern which connects' (Formenti 2018) me with relationships and the communities of which I am a part, and the larger social and ecological world. This awareness has aesthetic, ethical and epistemological implications, since I only see a small arc of a larger circle (Bateson 2016). So, I began to seek other perspectives, allowing them to challenge me and to weave them, as appropriate, into more of a whole. I have been working recently on the interconnections of knowledge and wisdom in our bodies and art, with groups of professionals who seek transformation, using processes of 'composition' (Formenti 2008) and greater awareness of interconnectivity. Now there is this book and our pilgrimage: where further composition is sought, since we are different people, and readers will be challenged by our diversity, as in fact we are. So, let us see if dialogue helps us to achieve a greater shared depth and connectivity.

Linden, Desire Beyond Fragments

For me, Linden, the metaphor of 'fragments' both haunts and energises my work. There are feelings of internal fragmentation, sometimes strong, other times less so, between my past and present, appearance and feeling, who I am and want to be, the feminine and masculine as well as between false and truer selves (West 1996, 2001, 2016). Fragments dominate the academy, too, between the different disciplines, and in the separation of mind, body and emotion. The academic world can embody, as Laura notes, either/or dynamics. Academic tribes can stifle us and the desire for multi-disciplinarity; the sociological and psychological have especially suffered from this, among other disciplines. Fractures partly emanate from differences in how we perceive the world or generate knowledge, as well as what counts as significant ways of seeing, in a given community. We may view the world and ourselves as objective phenomena and consider 'subjectivity' to be a problem or outside the remit of science. Nowadays many of us search for meaningful connections across difference. Psychosocial studies and auto/biographical research, broadly defined, are prime examples of this (Merrill and West 2009; Hollway and Jefferson 2000).

Drawing together complex strands, the circuitry that constitutes life and learning, is of course difficult. Strands encompass relationships, families, communities, ecologies, and past, present and future; and within these, experiences of pain, joy, loss, distress, illusion, love, beauty, ugliness, hate, struggle, disorientation, grandiosity, narcissism, rejection, and death. We may only see these dynamics through a glass darkly, even after many years of psychoanalysis or academic study. We, I, can remain troubled by the interplay of past, present and future, as the future enters the present and past in re-storying a life. Pilgrimage itself is about a desired future, where something might be resolved. Strange as it might seem, we need to be anchored in a future, to compose present and past meaning in our lives. The future called this book is an example, as are our children. We need a stake in that undiscovered territory to manage a present and past, but the work is done in conditions of uncertainty.

Academically and personally, the continuing separation of psychological levels of experience from the socio-cultural matters greatly, in the general and particulars. The split made little sense when interrogating my own life, through psychoanalysis and doing auto/biographical narrative research. Class, gender, intimate dynamics and psyche are of a piece in biographical work, as are the dynamics of there and then, here and now, the present, future and history. The separation of psychology and sociology, and the denial or suspicion of subjectivity, stifles the intellectual and educational imagination. My understanding of transformation involves straddling these fragmented ways of knowing.

As a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, I can be sceptical about the frequent use of words like transformation and transformative learning. The more they are used, the less convincing they can seem. Deborah Britzman (2003), drawing on Freud as well as the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, has explored the difficulties of self-transformation and the transformation of the other. There is, she suggests, a 'passion for ignorance', including the commitment not to know what one already knows. Hannah Arendt (1958), writing about the human condition, interrogated life in a communist dictatorship, when a neighbour goes missing. Her work touches on the desire not to know. People, we, I, turn the other way, not wanting to know or to *re-member*, for fear that we might become victims too. Memory itself unravels as difficult thoughts and feelings are pushed away, and experience becomes fragmented. Such 'psycho-social' defensiveness, or splitting, are not simply relevant to totalitarian societies, but are ubiquitous in our lives and learning.

We may, for instance, repress envy or hate in a meeting, in a school or university, or towards a lover or friend; we may stifle our narcissistic desire to be the centre of attention, or disturbing sexual feelings. We may be deeply ambivalent in the classroom towards a teacher, because of anxiety about the risk of dependence on the other; an anxiety embodied in largely unconscious ways. Past might colonise the present given a history of insecure attachments, from early life, which are played out in the present, as we struggle in a new relationship with a teacher or an idea. We may often retreat into ignorance, pretend it does not matter, or censor unsettling thoughts. I, Linden, have censored difficult

thoughts about imperfection and limitations, in the desire to be the best. Transformation has involved an acceptance of a frail humanity, imperfections integrated with strengths in what the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein called the depressive position.

Freud used the metaphor of the censor, drawing on Russian examples from the First World War. Letters home were edited, sometimes severely. He drew attention to our inner censor, the super-ego, shaped by an interplay of authority, out there, and internal frailty. What dared not be thought was dispatched to the unconscious, a useful if imprecise metaphor. Is there in fact a profound resistance to knowing and what are the implications for a book on transformative learning and education? Is there, indeed, as Lacan put it, a passion for ignorance? (Britzman 2003, p. 19). We might just want to live in our illusions or ignorance. But it might be that transformation lies in some capacity to move beyond fragments, splitting, idealisation or self-denigration, and maybe anxiety as to whether we can cope. This could however involve a lifetime's work, on the analyst's couch, in the classroom, in our intimate relationships, or maybe doing a doctorate and writing a book as we engage with the world's diverse perspectives. I think at this moment of a doctoral student, struggling to think about the relationship between class, poverty and intimate life. The struggle involved the pain of a turbulent relationship with her mother: and the feeling she was a surrogate for her mother's frustrated ambition and narcissism. Reading her thesis reminded me of my own struggles to please my mother, and at never being good enough (West 1996).

The passion not to know has been part of my life, and maybe of yours (West 2016). A passion called disassociation: as a child of the 1960s, at university, we were often busy plotting the new world order but left the women to tidy away the tea cups, while the porters and cleaning ladies dealt with the rest of the detritus from endless meetings. I played the game of the intellectual socialist, if very inadequately. Learning to be a man, more satisfactorily, has involved a long, tortuous journey of relational failure. Moreover, I was once the politician, which mattered in my life. It is not just the advertising men and women who treat people as objects, as a mass, but many politicians too. I was as culpable as any, if always struggling to do things better. There had to be a

different, more fulfilling way of being a man, and of doing masculinity, beyond competitiveness, misogyny and emotional death.

I have devoted years to the project. I began to consider education through that kind of lens. I thought—and still do—that transformation lies in negotiating transitional space between people, and between what is known and what can be discovered, in the language of Donald Winnicott (1971). Negotiating the tendency we all share, of defensiveness and retreat to the known and familiar, was a crucial element. The trouble with psychoanalysis was its tendency to stick too rigidly to the micro level, although Freud wrote about culture, violence and the origins of religious myth and prohibition. Staying at the micro-level was never enough when thinking about transformative struggles in my own life or in those of countless others in my research. I then met new theoretical friends on the journey, from the realm of critical theory as well as psychoanalysis, in studying 'non-traditional' learners in universities (Finnegan et al. 2014). Friends like Theodor Adorno and Axel Honneth, who used the word 'love' as a basic requirement in human flourishing, alongside a need for recognition in socio/cultural space (West 2014).

Adorno (1973) was preoccupied with how certain kinds of Marxism or what he called left Hegelianism, got it so wrong in predicting proletarian revolution. Look within, he suggested, at our capacity for intellectual grandiosity, and the power of omniscient fantasy. Axel Honneth (2009) thought psychoanalysis was essential in engaging with our fallibilities, inhibitions and in releasing the will: he also thought feeling recognised and legitimate in groups and whole societies was essential. His focus is on the dynamics of self-other recognition at different levels. We need love in the intimate sphere, but also self-respect and self-esteem in various cultural experience, for transformative moments. I found loving relationships in the personal sphere as well as self-other recognition in groups like ESREA.

I should mention John Dewey, who figures in my journey. His writing on democracy and the importance of particular qualities of relationship has been influential. Many groups provide recognition—like a robber band, or a militaristic Nazi group, and can be seductive for young men and women. But at the price of closure to the other, and to

self. Dewey also, like other American pragmatists, uses the word beauty as part of a perpetual experiment in what works, intellectually, or in creating good enough social forms. This book, for me, represents part of a pilgrimage of lifelong learning, and a search for beauty. It includes dialoguing with Laura about the systemic view of transformation; and a larger circuitry that shapes lives. I seek to imagine experiences of transformation through the eyes of a different person, a woman, from Lombardy, in Italy, with different experience as well as academic perspectives. We can call this our compositional, experimental and existential pilgrimage.

The Structure of the Book

The structure of our book is as important as its contents: we dialogue, across chapters and metalogues, to weave together, as appropriate, diverse concepts and stories from our meetings with many authors and our lived experience in auto/biographical work. We play with the idea of perspective throughout, looking at transformation through varying lenses and composing what we hope is a rich and meaningful landscape. Our lenses are not separate, though. It is not a grocery list, simply juxtaposing perspectives, but an attempt to compose a multiple—hence deeper and thicker—description and analysis (Bateson 1979); a description and analysis of what learning is and can be for adults. The landscape encompasses form, perspective, criticality, pessimism, recognition, soul work, body, mind, beauty, love, context, social transformation, equity, imagination, spirituality. We believe these are necessary ingredients for making a meaningful life and for a good enough education.

Some landmarks re-appear, here and there, in our pilgrimage, but are seen from different points of view. Like love, relationships, otherness, and ambivalence. Or the need for social as well as personal change. As stated, this is a roadmap, not the whole territory: we rely on what works best for us and for those whom we have met and listened to; maybe for you. What is true and beautiful, perhaps, in the spirit of American pragmatism. We also seek to remain open to the limitations of our perspectives, since there is always another way of seeing and knowing.

Our first metalogue was provoked by an encounter with beauty and its critique. The former was Linden's experience of Michelangelo's *Pieta,* while a woman and feminist scholar thought it patriarchal, embodying a distorted representation of women. Our conversation deals with beauty, conflict, aesthetics, as well as the struggle to dialogue across difference in transformation.

In Chapter 2, we play with metaphors of form, formlessness and trans-formation, through the sociological lens of Zygmunt Bauman's 'liquid modernity'. Processes of formation have historically emphasised the cultivation of self-knowledge and self-care, as well as an engagement with an agreed canon or body of knowledge. But this has been rendered difficult by the instabilities, discontents and disputations of liquid modernity. The exploration of topics in depth is replaced by the imperative of instantaneity, of pressure to be flexible, always moving, and to acquire instrumental knowledge for labour markets, quickly.

Bauman suggests we are like nomads, drifting from place to place, without the solace of deeper forms of growth through longer term, satisfying relationships. Solidarities have fractured in the destabilising play of the speculator's algorithm, while power circulates in an unaccountable, undemocratic global space. Transformation might even become a seductive apparition, the language of the marketing men and women penetrating our culture and even the academy. Buy this new degree product and your life is transformed, say the snake-oil salespersons. But we suggest, based on our auto/biographical research, over many years, that it is possible to find good enough love, relationships and stability in the flotsam and jetsam of experience, even when nomads. In fact, nomadic lives offer many possibilities, including a cosmopolitan spirit that can be liberating on pilgrimage.

In Chapter 3, we consider the idea of perspective transformation in the North American transformative education literature. It is a view associated with Jack Mezirow, who grounded his thinking in research on adult learners returning to university. Reflection was at the core of this, he concluded, a kind of examination and assessment of the validity of our existing knowledge. Adults, he thought, seek richer, more coherent, and satisfying experience and ways of making sense of this. Mezirow's ideas have seeded and grown: other scholars have used them

to create new perspectives and questions: for example, about social change, and the importance of challenging oppressive ideologies that colonise our inner worlds; or of the importance of body, spirit and soul in a larger, more generous understanding of rationality. We then move to interrogate the idea and practice of perspective, born from artistic imagination, as an embodied metaphor for Western epistemology. How do we come to see a painting, for instance, or a whole life, in culturally biased ways, yet also creating unforeseen possibilities, alongside any limitations?

In Chapter 4, we glance further at perspectives on criticality and its central place in transformation. For Stephen Brookfield, to be critical is a sacred idea. It is about challenging power and ideology and how these conspire to constrain us. We engage with the Frankfurt School of Critical Sociology, in dialogue with Theodor Adorno and his questioning of the transcendental power of critical reason; and with Axel Honneth and his theory of recognition. We tell the story of a learner called Mathew, from Linden's research among non-traditional students. Mathew, the asylum seeker, who moved to London from an African war zone, where members of his own family were murdered. He struggled against racism and stigmatisation but managed to keep on keeping on, with the help—love even—of two lecturers in an Access to higher education programme. He found, in Honneth's terms, self-recognition in a university programme and in becoming an advocate for non-traditional students, and other migrants, in his local community. He built critical perspectives on health and well-being, but his criticality was grounded in love and processes of recognition. By being fully recognised ourselves, Honneth suggests, we are more fully able to recognise others in mutually transforming ways.

We then engage in a second metalogue on Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Robert Kegan (2000) used the play to illustrate just how wrenching a process transformation can be. What do we see, we ask, in this powerful drama? A Doll's House was set in a Norwegian town in about 1879. By presenting the rebellion of a married woman, who discovers her oppression in a patriarchal society, the play caused a storm, challenging traditional gendered hierarchies and discourse. Nora left her husband and children, defying expectations about the holy covenant of marriage and

maternity as the central aspect of a woman's life. She felt like a doll, and treated as such, and began a journey towards self-respect. But what of the children? Our defiance, and the urge to transform, inevitably involves others, who can be damaged. Can there be narcissistic excess in a journey of transformation, when our relationships are discarded in the name of self-realisation? Is transformation necessarily a shattering of lives, a wrenching, involving the sacrifice of others as well as fragments of ourselves?

In Chapter 5, we pause to dialogue with Sigmund Freud about education as an impossible business. How educational encounters are riddled with infantilisation, envy and hatred. Where students are greedy and demand instant gratification; and teachers sadistic. A pessimism stalks this part of the landscape, maybe rooted in Freud's own biography and the barbarism he witnessed overwhelming Europe in the last century. Humans, he insisted, are competitive and aggressive creatures, and educators, in the name of rationality, easily airbrush this from the picture. We consider other Freudian perspectives, including those of Deborah Britzman, who regards love and education as intimates, and their offerings as precarious. They encourage dependency and helplessness, as well as the possibility of new perspective. Psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott reminds us that we are always forged in relationship, and as infants can feel misunderstood and even illegitimate. But recognition and reparation are always possible. Linden draws once more on his research among adult learners in universities to illuminate deeply ambivalent processes but how recognition arrives in the attentiveness of a tutor, or in literature, enabling a student to feel understood, legitimate, maybe transformed, at least for a while.

In Chapter 6, we meet 'soul work', a search to integrate different parts of the psyche, in the name of individuation. We dialogue with C.G. Jung and Sabina Spielrein who emphasised the importance of symbolic rather than logical thinking, in releasing unconscious metaphors and energy. If Freud thought that religion was an escape from reality, Jung considered it, potentially, as a route to the divine, and oneness with creation. Jung used literature, like Dante's pilgrimage, to illuminate the journey of the soul to a kind of transformation; from base metal to gold, with spiritual helpers on the way, including Beatrix,

Virgil, the Virgin Mary and Christ. Beatrix represents the transformative power of love. We finish the chapter with the biography of a family doctor on a journey to self-understanding, and the integration of feminine and masculine propensities as well as recovering the spiritual in his life. The spiritual is especially important, for Linden, when working with marginalised, distressed patients.

At the start of Chapter 7 we encounter a mature student called Sofia, and Laura opens a window into embodied and embedded learning. In Sophia's biography, we have glimpses of struggles to be, repressed in her family, but also in the organisation of university courses and more generally by attitudes to mature women students in the wider culture. Conversations in guidance workshops created a safe space for different qualities of thinking to emerge. Transformation becomes a whole-body experience; and education a process of fostering new relationships between people and with the symbolic order. Laura dialogues with Gregory Bateson about different levels of learning. Level 0 has to do with a capacity to respond consistently. Level 1 involves changes in the quality or quantity of responses, within a given way of seeing. Level 2 is finding other perspectives. Level 3 is about identity change, a transformation in our ways of articulating alternatives, and ourselves. Bateson considers unconscious processes to be dominant in human activity, insisting that conscious purpose and rationality drive humans into myopic and destructive behaviour. Corrective forces are found in truer qualities of relationship, as well as in the unconscious and the sensitive (aesthetical) body, through the mediation of art, dream, play, and humour.

In Chapter 8, we engage with social transformation, as a kind of antidote to more individualistic perspectives. We ruminate on the historical connection between democratic learning, individual and collective transformation, and the role of fraternity, the spiritual and the good enough group. We dialogue with the Christian/Ethical Socialism of R.H. Tawney, a distinguished British adult educator, who saw the good workers' education tutorial class as a manifestation or social incarnation of the Kingdom on earth, a microcosm of the transformed society. We meet British cultural theorist Raymond Williams and his writing on culture as ordinary. Williams was a humanistic Marxist, like Antonio

Gramsci, considering the struggle for transformation to be about creating public space in which hegemonies—taken for granted and colonising views of the world—are challenged, and the social order changed in a celebration of the human spirit. We mediate on the separation of the social, spiritual and the transcendent in writings about social transformation, while Laura challenges the absence of women in our journey and introduces various Italian feminists who helped auto/biographically, and in anti-fascist struggles and against violence. The two great Italian churches of Communism and Catholicism, and their patriarchy and hierarchy, are contrasted with popular education's horizontal forms of dialogue and reciprocal learning.

In Chapter 9, 'Imagine', we enter an explicitly auto/biographical landscape and tell stories of the artistic, literary and poetic imagination in our lives. Laura talks of every woman as an artist, and Linden the act of being a man, and how enactment, and text, building on Jungian ideas, can release primitive and repressed emotion. We move from rational word-based textual analysis, into the play of heart and imagination. We invite you into our play of words, like beauty, truth and love, and suggest these are fundamental in any struggle to transform.

Finally, in Chapter 10, we engage once more with religious and spiritual sensibilities and the light they throw on transformation. We return to our core metaphor of pilgrimage, as a synonym for transformation. We draw on Libby Tisdell's work on pilgrimage to suggest that spirituality is more than religion: the awareness and capacity to honour interconnectedness and mystery in life; and movement 'toward greater authenticity or to a more authentic self'. Linden has done pilgrimage too and celebrates the metaphor's potential for illumination. Laura interrogates her atheism alongside the need to transcend ego, her own limited experience, and surrender to forces beyond her grasp or capacity. We share ambivalence towards religious perspectives while noting that ritual can express and illuminate journeys of transformation. We introduce dialogue between humanists and the religious, noting that bigots exist everywhere, and that the good dialogue depends on reasonableness and the mutual acknowledgment of quest. We suggest that religion, as patriarchal wisdom and truth, delivered on tablets of stone, can involve the profoundest splitting, of heaven 'up there' and hell down

below. Drawing on Blake and Bateson we suggest that heaven and hell are in fact part of us, here and now and essential elements in seeking the worthwhile life. We return to ideas of learning and the spirit of transformation. We contemplate an image of transformation that is emotional, social and cognitive, as well as deeply embodied, relational, spiritual, and critical at one and the same time. We seek to move beyond fragments and consider a pattern that connects.

The final metalogue begins with reflection on two cathedrals, the Italian Gothic Duomo in Milan, and the Norman/Gothic Cathedral of Canterbury. They are symbols of landscape. What do we see when looking at these two magnificent buildings? In Milano, Linden saw a huge screen on the left-hand side of the Duomo, advertising Samsung mobile phones. Laura had not noticed this at all. You need the other's sight, to discover your own. Our final metalogue strives to move beyond the seduction of images, capitalism and the loss of the sacred, as well as the patriarchal and reductive representation of women, towards the imperative of quest and keeping on keeping on in our nomadic lives. We have learned to grasp details and get a glimpse of a bigger landscape, and to be perpetually curious and reflexive towards the world outside and within. We are lifelong learners and our task, as academics, is to bring love and criticality into the frame, and to be perpetually open to new, multi-disciplinary, and beautiful ways of seeing.

Fig. 1.1 Michelangelo's *La Pietà*, St. Peter's Cathedral, Rome

What Do You See? A Metalogue on Difference

Laura: How can we build our dialogue on difference?

Linden: Do you mean *our* difference?

Laura: Yes. Did you know that Bateson wrote imaginary dialogues between a father and a daughter in his books? It was his way to story epistemology and invite the reader to think narratively. He called them metalogues, meta-dialogues, because the content was illustrated through the process.

Linden: Mhm… these then could be the beginnings of transformative conversations.

Laura: Right. It is also about you and me talking to each other and how ideas develop through difference. A sort of philosophical dialogue, transcending the identity of the speakers. Our difference goes beyond us; it's a difference of sight, of perspectives. We could call it a cultural difference, maybe. I am not sure. A metalogue is also an epistemological exercise about seeing, embodied by two speakers. People see the 'same' object in different ways, and this reveals their contexts, their life worlds.

Linden: Got it. Let's start then. Look at this image. What do you see?

Laura: What…? Yes. Oh! I see an amazing piece of art, *La Pietà* by Michelangelo (Fig. 1.1). It's white, so gleaming white that it could have a light inside it. And smooth, polished, material. Makes me want to touch it, caress it. And you? What do you see?

Linden: I see something that speaks to me. It's transcendental. Sometimes you get the same feeling in a landscape. Something beyond representation: you are overwhelmed by it. Shall I tell you the story of my first ever encounter with the sculpture?

Laura: Yes, if you want, please tell the story. This is typical of you, I mean, telling a story.

Linden: It was years ago. I cried when I saw it. I did not know what was happening to me. I saw the sculpture, half-hidden in a corner of St Peter's in Rome and thought or rather felt 'This is beautiful'. It spoke to me then, and still speaks now, more than words.

Laura: This is not only what you *see*. It's about memory, emotions, identity. A reconstruction and the story of an encounter that touched you inside.

Linden: Well, I was wandering around this huge basilica, and five to ten minutes later I *saw* the sculpture and *seeing it* triggered the strong reaction. Overwhelming. I did not know immediately that it was by Michelangelo. Only afterwards, walking away from Piazza San Pietro, I *saw* it in the souvenir stands: dozens, hundreds of postcard reproductions of *La Pietà*. Then I knew.

Laura: My first meeting with it was at sixteen, visiting Rome with my class. It surprised me, it was already my favourite piece, but I had imagined it bigger. I also felt strangely moved by it, for the contrast of beauty and sorrow that it communicates. At that time, the piece was not protected, as it is now, under a glass box. You could almost touch it. Sculptures are so material that I always think about touching them.

Linden: Touching is a different way of knowing from seeing.

Laura: Yes, wasn't this conversation meant to illuminate the process of seeing? Learning by seeing seems crucial for the human species.

Linden: Perception is more than seeing. It is a meeting between inside and outside. Body, heart and soul are entailed.

Laura: What do we know about perception? Visual perception is so dominant for us but touching or hearing work differently. Do you know John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, the book from the BBC show in the Seventies? He claimed that 'seeing comes before words' and we approach art in ways that are not neutral since we are guided by assumptions, and our frames may be problematic indeed, shaped by power, by our previous learning contexts, and prejudice. How can we become aware of the relationship between what we see and what we know? And how did we come to see things in such a way, affected by what we know or believe?

Linden: I know the book. 'Every image embodies a way of seeing' (Berger 1972, p. 10). I liked it, but somehow, I was not fully satisfied; it is too materialistic in its suspicion of the idea of mystery and the religious.

Laura: But matter matters. Perception depends on our place in space and time, and our position, not least physical. We see what we act. I learnt this from my father, a photographer and a self-taught *amateur* of art. He showed me how we need light and shadow, in good proportions,

to be able to see. Especially with art, we need to shift position: take a distance and then go as near as possible, to discover detail. Differences, and their composition.

Linden: For me, seeing can be a primitive experience, encompassing, as Berger says, something before words or rationality. Of course, we see in certain ways due to our previous knowing and believing: in this sense I may be seeing through an uninterrogated cultural as well as a more personal lens.

Laura: Discourses we live by, yes. I am happy to show this to the reader by writing a metalogue. The problem is that we are too much interested in 'what' we see, and we forget everything about the 'how'.

Linden: What we see is relevant, though.

Laura: Yes, of course, but when we look at something we are enacting a world though the relationship we weave with that something, in that context. The context and the process are relevant. I am looking at this photograph because *you* brought it here, and we decided to have a conversation about seeing. The postcard itself is far less interesting than our relationship and how we are looking at it in this moment, and maybe changing our perspective thanks to the conversation. Do you agree?

Linden: Mhm… I am thinking. Say some more.

Laura: What I mean, is that relationships are going on here and now, between us, with this place where we are, with Michelangelo through this image of his piece of art, and even with my father… all of them enter in the process of vision, in my thoughts and your thoughts, and in our talking. The context is implicated in the act of seeing, and somehow revealed by it. This object has no 'inherent features', since a few differences out of several become relevant through our interactions. Seeing is a process of multiple interactions. It is complex.

Linden: Complex and potentially conflictual. Different ways of seeing entail different ideas, values, beliefs. People get anxious when they realise there are other visions, different from their own, especially when something is precious to them.

Laura: This is why we need dialogue. When you answered my question—'What do you see'—I was disappointed. My assumption was that we were going to talk about perception, but you brought in emotions, or inner feelings, I don't know, and transcendence… It happens all the time: we need to ask 'what do you see' to others, to be able to start a conversation. This is a simple question, but powerful. We need to know the other's perspective, since somehow, we know it is different from our own.

Linden: So, the answer given by the other—consciously or not—brings to awareness of a potential difference, and maybe we can begin a dialogical process of transformation.

Laura: Yes, the other's sight is always different. Maybe it is necessary for transformation. 'A difference that makes a difference', as Bateson would say, is the trigger of learning. Maybe the most relevant of all differences is the other's sight.

Linden: This brings us to the importance of subjectivity.

Laura: Well, as far as I see it, it goes beyond a claim of subjectivity. I am suspicious of this concept, when it is separated from structure, from the 'politics of perception'. There are expectations implicated in the process. If I had answered your question: 'I see a postcard', you could have laughed—a signal of breaking rules is humour. I mean: we 'see' what is expected, since we interpret the context. So, images structure, and are structured by perception, as Berger tried to argue. This is crucial in our work as educators. What we see and how we see feeds back into the processes of vision, of knowledge. Images produce effects in us, they educate our sight. And the politics of perception are hidden, we are so accustomed to them that we barely notice. Or laugh when they are subverted.

Linden: This makes me think of transformation as a cliché. When Berger wrote his book, in the Seventies, pervasive and subtle marketing was already in place to captivate our senses. Berger pointed at manufactured glamour, and the way it was employed to tell everybody that self-transformation was possible, and even easy. Your life will be transformed simply by buying something new, or by using a new tool, even accessing some new course… education is not exempt from marketisation.

Laura: This conversation is bringing us into new and wider territory, by weaving and interconnecting discourses habitually separated. Starting from a seemingly trivial question—'what do you see?'—and from our different sights of 'the same' object, we generate a range of questions, often hidden or obscure; perhaps the questions emerge in our ongoing conversation. Questions like how does what you know shape your seeing? How did you come to think and answer like that? What are your assumptions? What do you believe? *Who are you*, in fact?

Linden: Every question brings a more fundamental one in its train.

Laura: Yes! And we *learn* to see and to answer in a certain way, since our sight is shaped by the very process of seeing/knowing. Our history as learners is entailed in every single act of seeing/knowing, and is shaped by it, in turn. In the process, we learn assumptions about the process

itself. Epistemological assumptions. In this way, we build our identity as observers and learners. As knowers indeed.

Linden: I think childhood experiences are crucial in the building of our seeing/knowing, as you call it.

Laura: Yes, well, I do not know. I resist the deterministic idea that everything is rooted in early life experiences. We are writing this book to develop our own satisfactory theory of learning, aren't we? I want to explore with you the differences between our embodied theories and what these differences tell about our minds, and this conversation, and about learning more generally. What's the point of it? Let's go back to what *you* see and what *I* see, when we look at the same object. Apparently, we see different things. Look at our first answer. The material against the spiritual. In my reaction, I was stressing an aesthetic appraisal of the object, its sensorial qualities, and my action in relation to it.

Linden: Yes, this is definitely you. While I pointed to the inside, and an immediate emotional impact. Something that became precious to me. But there is not such a distance, I do not feel opposition: our reactions are both deeply spiritual, in the end, if I know you. And I am struggling myself to integrate the spiritual and material in ways of seeing. This is material for our mutual learning, if not transformation.

Laura: You are probably right. Both our reactions could be read as a hundred per cent spiritual and hundred per cent material. As we are. We are human. And yet, I have a strong penchant for materiality. A sculpture is thick, physical, it occupies space. Marble is matter, heavy, raw, it needs quite a lot of strength, muscles, sweat, to be transformed into this amazing, light, and spiritual form. Then the colour, oh my god, did you see the colour? I wonder which specific chemical composition can produce that quality of gleaming white. All this touches my body, triggering neural firing in my retinas, and nerves, and complex configurations of activation in different areas of my brain…

Linden: Ok Laura, I see your perspective. Matter can become alive, but only given certain conditions. What does a group need, for example, to come alive? In my experience, if you come to it with generosity and the desire to understand each other, things will happen. So, the spirit that is moving and opening things up goes beyond materiality. It has in part to do with beauty, although of course that is culturally and biographically shaped.

Laura: When you say 'I see your perspective', you are using a metaphor. A perspective is not a 'thing', that can be seen. Or maybe it is seeing, but of a different logical level. Gregory Bateson was very fond, at

a certain point, of Russell and Whitehead's logical types: he thought that we need rules not to get caught in murky ideas, however unavoidable this somehow is. We can use 'seeing' to address an action or a class of actions, and maybe even as a class of classes. Then *seeing* becomes, for us as humans, a generalised metaphor of knowledge. Is this saying something about human knowing?

Linden: I will tell you why I showed this image to you. There was a recent episode, you were also there, remember? In my university, during a conference a couple of years ago: *Re-enchanting the academy*. In a workshop, we were asked to describe something enchanting, that touched our souls. I thought the Pietà and told the story that I have told you. When I went to Rome it was an enormous experience.

Laura: Rome or the picture?

Linden: I cannot separate them. The feeling of being in the Eternal City, a lad from the English provinces, from a post-industrial city; and then the hugeness of Rome and St. Peter's… and then the sculpture. I was a bit dis-orientated. I was even disorientated by a meal I had that night. Tripe was a dish we ate in my childhood, but then to eat it in Rome, looking at the Colosseum, and in a spicy sauce was too much. Encounters with the exotic as well as the divine.

Laura: Yes, the context where we experience things is far from being neutral. Some perceptions, some ideas, can become meaningful only in a context.

Linden: But then we had a discussion, and another participant, a woman said 'When I look at that picture, I do not see anything sublime at all. I see a man's idealization of women, I see a religion that I do not like, and I see patriarchy stamped all over!'

Laura: Yes, I see this perspective too.

Linden: An Islamist would maybe think the statue is idolatry, to be destroyed. There were periods of iconoclasm in Christianity too, of course. This statue might have been destroyed. To re-enchant our lives, we need to engage with different perspectives without destruction and breakdown. We can walk in St. Peter's—or anywhere else—and let go of the negativity, and the forces that destroy possibilities for dialogue. The transcendental does not belong to one culture. I am also thinking of an observation by the classicist Mary Beard, in a BBC television series called *Civilisations.* She visited Ely Cathedral, in East Anglia, where statues of Saints were desecrated in a burst of iconoclasm in 17th Century England. Heads and hands were chopped off, stained

glass windows destroyed and replaced by plain glass. And yet in one chapel where much damage was done, a different quality of beauty was created through the increased light and space. This is complex, but we might even transcend destruction, to see the world, beauty and ourselves in new ways.

Laura: When we begin to focus on perspectives, we need to manage conflict. So, now we should discuss how we can solve conflicts, when different perspectives are legitimate, each rooted in a biography, in a context, in different ways of seeing. I wanted to bring you into another terrain, to discuss about perspective as a metaphor and as a concrete thing. I had in mind the multiple perspectives in art and learning, and the links between seeing, experiencing and telling. I wanted to stress our personal positioning towards ideas.

Linden: Yes, this is what we are doing.

Laura: Really?

Linden: Yes, I asked you 'what do you see?', as you asked me to do the same. And you answered. Then I also gave my answer. That brought us to where we are now.

Laura: Yes, but I had in mind many other questions, like a reciprocal interview. For example: Why art? But maybe this could be asked in another moment.

Linden: Yes, I think so, dialogue takes time.

Ideas Around This Metalogue

'Every image embodies a way of seeing' (Berger 1972, p. 10). Seeing depends on our place in space and time, on our position (not only physically), and our action in the world. It depends on (and reveals) who we are. It is subjective, active and self-confirming: we select and focus, we see in a certain way due to our previous knowing and beliefs, according to habit. We wanted to show this to you, our reader, using the metalogue.

The question 'what' is somehow misleading: when we 'look at' something we are always, as stated, enacting a relationship with that something, in a context. We are not made to see 'something out there', but only to see through the relationship we have with it and the context that makes sense of it for us. They are all implicated in the act of seeing.

The features of the object are coupled with our capacity to grasp them. Seeing is a subjective/objective dynamic and contextual: it is a process of multiple interactions. It is complex.

So, we might better ask 'how do you see?' But this is a strange question and it has a poor likelihood of being a good one. We are often so blind in respect to the how. Unless we begin a dialogue. The answer of the other brings a difference in our awareness. The sight of the other is always different. '*Information*. Any difference that makes a difference' (Bateson 1979, p. 250).

In Western art, there is increasing consciousness of individuality and history. Images of art in Ancient Greece and the Renaissance reveal how the world appeared to the artists and how it was constructed. Not only as 'documents', but as testimony of the imagination and the artist's experience of 'the sensible'. Art builds—or participates in the building of—*l'esprit du temps*, the *soul* of a certain period in history and space.

How does the perceiver (artist) position him/herself in relation to objects, to the world? What clues about 'culture' are embodied in every object of art? Seeing comes before words and can never be totally encompassed by them. But the contrary is also true, in that words can take our seeing beyond established habits, to something or somewhere else.

Perspective is unique to European art in the sense of being centred on the eye of the beholder. 'Every drawing that used perspective suggested to the spectator that he was the unique centre of the world' (Berger 1972, p. 18). What kind of culture creates such art? What kind of individuals are created by it? The art is produced to address one subject in one place at one time. But it also seeks to encompass a 'universe', albeit arranged for the unique spectator. Ways of seeing are also deeply political, which was what our colleague in the Canterbury conference was suggesting. Some ways are deemed more important than others. We must be able to continue a dialogue, even across such profound difference: but it is hard. Is this a fundamental purpose for adult education?

We return to these issues in Chapter 3 and beyond. But now we locate ideas of formation, transformation and transformative learning in an historical context, in cultures where everything can seem in perpetual transformation, and where nothing might feel solid in society, education or in our personal lives. This is the condition called liquid modernity.

2

Form and Formlessness

The notions of 'form' and 'formlessness' provide two opening metaphors for this chapter, where we dialogue between us, and with influential thinkers, about living, learning, education, formation and transformation in late, post- or liquid modernity. We think about how the latter perspective was framed to capture important and disturbing aspects of the times in which we live. We consider how a metaphor like this plays out in our own lives and those of others. Liquid modernity is the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's (2000) leitmotif for our present times and we wonder about its implications for the formation of cohesive selves and understandings of trans-formation. Formation has of course been considered a fundamental aim of education, over millennia. From Plato's *paideia* and other philosophical schools in Ancient Greece; to the German concept of *Bildung,* in the eighteenth century, and the French/Italian *formation/formazione*. Here, the making of citizens entails building self-knowledge, as well as the cultivation of the arts, humanities and sciences as the means to enlightenment and civilisation. *Bildung* focused on the life enhancing qualities of interpretation, understanding and gaining knowledge; a kind of edification of the self by the self

(Fuhr et al. 2017). For Bauman, however, liquid modernity means that individuals face acute uncertainty and even under-determination. Teaching and learning as well as education become short-term, instrumentalised and superficial, focused on precarious jobs and transient labour markets.

One core argument is that formation, or the capacity for self-edification, require sufficient degrees of stability and certainly—in relationships, families, education, work and wider social interaction. Plus forms of education that take time to mature and draw on inherited and worthwhile knowledge tested in experiential fire. Today, the consensus as to what is worthwhile or valuable has unravelled and we are asked to choose from a bewildering cafe menu of predominantly junk food. Can we learn a humanity in such conditions? (Bauman 2005b). If stability is constitutive of human life and education, we might be in trouble. Both knowledge and the self are contested, in a shifting terrain. The hard-fought struggle for edification has become sacrificed on the altar of immediacy, relevance, material consumption and even questioning as to whether the self exists at all.

For sociologists like Bauman, profound economic, social and cultural change has undermined overly linear, ordered, rational expectations about education and self-formation. The exponential growth of knowledge, for instance, transcends the individual's capacity to assimilate it. (We could of course argue that this was always true, for the majority, who were denied access to higher learning.) Nowadays the divide between a minority with relatively good access to knowledge, of a substantial and imaginative kind, and those instructed in the skills of flexibility and adaptation to the market place, is widening. Many people enter 'a landscape of ignorance, where it is easy to feel lost' (Bauman 2005, p. 25).

This is a world, too, where historic determinants of class or cultural identity have loosened alongside the weakening of the solidarities that made meaningful change, or self-formation, possible. The workers' education movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provide a good example (see Chapter 8). Undoubtedly, more people now have access to information, travel, languages, courses, and digital technology (Nicolaides and Marsick 2016). But, paradoxically, this might increase

disorientation and uncertainty, and compel us to make increasingly unconfident choices. And if there are many more opportunities for marginalised groups, they can seem fragile, even for university graduates. Jobs are precarious, labour is casualised, while the power and wealth of the few increases. The traditional frameworks of adult education for citizenship and collective self-improvement have weakened as the power of organised labour has fractured. Competitive and individualistic survival is the new mantra. We are all hunters now.

Bauman, in these terms, offers a deeply pessimistic reading of the present, in which contingency combines with growing inequality to narrow meaningful educational, occupational and even relational opportunities for the majority. Notions of transformation are also problematised, if formation, in earlier stages of life, is so fragile. We too may conspire in our freneticism, seduced as we may be by an endless quest to change, driven by the fantasy of the new. The constant marketing of 'transformative education' could itself be one example. Institutions proclaim they transform lives, but the reality might be disillusionment and frustration.

Troubling Liquidity: An Outsider's Perspective

Such a perspective on liquid modernity is troubling—the idea that social forms and human relationships melt away faster than new ones are forged, while the seductions and manipulations of consumerism have strengthened, disturbs. Becoming a self is problematic because some stability in our relationships with actual people and in the symbolic world might be essential to biological and psychological flourishing. Notions of life authorship and meaningful, self-generated transformation risk being cut adrift in a kind of cultural and economic tsunami. Even worse, to repeat, we may be responsible for creating some of the formlessness and drift ourselves: in the restless search for the new, fashionable and stimulating. These words are crafted in Milan, a capital of fashion, where we are completing our text. The cultivation of desire and perpetual discontent appears especially seductive in a fashionable city such as this.

Moreover, we are all vulnerable to the dominance of *homo economicus*: our humanity is reduced to a metaphor of rational, highly individualistic, self-aggrandising calculating machines. Within which lurks the power of the mass persuaders, perpetually enticing us towards the pursuit of targeted lifestyles. What is worse, for academic educators, is that new kinds of 'education' might offer no real 'form' at all, but rather easy, quick solutions to problems themselves lacking shelf life. We can become disillusioned, lost in adaptation, excited but perpetually vulnerable to the forces of globalisation, neo-liberalism, unregulated labour markets and digital manipulation. Policy makers claim the necessity of lifelong learning, but this is short-term and technicist. The doctrines of employee responsibility, flexibility and frequent job changes create the new and numerous precariat. Manualisation, deprofessionalisation and fragile employment can be the lot of those like career guidance or social workers who have invested in higher education (Reid and West 2018).

Bauman places these processes into a wider sociological framing. The present time is characterised less by opportunity, he insists, and more by feelings of uncertainty and the privatization of ambivalence (Bauman 2000; Bauman and Raud 2015). It is a kind of chaotic continuation of modernity, where a person shifts from one social position to another in a fluid manner. Nomadism—read by Bauman with concern—is a general trait of the 'liquid modern' person, as s/he flows through life like a tourist, changing places, jobs, spouses, values and without traditional networks of support and cultural embeddedness. Bauman (2005) goes into considerable detail and examines the implications for 'education' and 'formation'.

First, social structures are not given time to solidify, meaning that the fulfillment of any life project becomes illusory. Work is a prime example in processes of casualisation in parts of the 'developed' world; and mass migration to cities, and fragile, exploitative and even dangerous employment in the 'developing' one. The relationships of solidarity and possibilities for collective action via workers' organisations are weak, in the face of the power of globalized capital.

Second, politics and power have become divorced from each other. 'Power now circulates within the politically uncontrolled global space'

(Bauman 2005, p. 303). Political processes once linked individual and public concerns with engendering collective action and resolution, but these processes have weakened, with politicians appearing like marionettes, dancing to the globalised rhythms of elites and powerful corporations. Political institutions, like the Emperor in Hans Christian Andersen's story, are revealed as naked and false, but only for those with the courage or innocence to name them so. Market forces enter the stage, often in capricious ways, as global capital seeks higher rewards, and lower labour costs, everywhere.

Third, there is a withdrawal of 'communal insurance', as welfare states and social solidarities fracture and risk is privatised. A premium is placed on competitive orientation, degrading collaboration and teamwork in the process.

Fourth, and connectedly, there is a collapse of longer term thinking and planning; and of the social (and educational) structures in which thinking, planning and action can be inscribed. The demise of workers' education in the United Kingdom, and other 'developed' and 'democratic' countries, may be thought of in such terms. Once creating collective resources of hope and spaces for collaboration and democratic learning, workers' education is now largely gone or gravely weakened, like other workers' institutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Goldman 1995, 2013; Holford 2015; West 2016, 2017).

Fifth, the future is deemed out of control in a movement from hope to apprehension. Apprehension and uncertainty bring fear: that our jobs will disappear in the play of the speculator's algorithm, or that our individual educational efforts bring little by way of a secure future. There is only impermanence and the perpetual mantra of lifelong learning as a kind of salvation, uttered with a sort of medieval religious fervour to the diverse members of the new international precariat.

Sixth, the burden for dealing with the flotsam and jetsam of our lives is individualised. We must change ourselves and loyalties as and when necessary, almost regardless of the circumstances or consequence for our lives. The idea of risk and insurance against it being collectivised, through the provision of welfare states, because we all experience times of vulnerability and need, is rendered fragile. The only people to

be rescued seem to be the bankers, where profit is privatised and losses socialised, because banks are deemed too big to fail.

Bauman plays with other metaphors in his interrogation of our 'posture towards the world'—of gamekeepers, gardeners or hunters. These are embodied states, that we can interpret as 'perspectives' (see the next chapter). In the pre-modern period, the gamekeeper operated within a social ethic of things being best when not interfered with, that the world was 'a divine chain of being and has its rightful and useful place' (Bauman 2005, p. 306). The preservation of 'natural' balance was the rule. In the earlier modern period, the metaphor of the gardener applied, where the world must be ordered and controlled by attention, effort and nurture. The gardener 'knows best', in this metaphor. We work out what is best for the plots of our lives, or livelihoods, with solutions lying in our own heads. But we can also perceive this to be hubris and excluding: the gardener defines what are the 'weeds' to be uprooted and destroyed; there is no 'natural' or 'divine' order, human kind brings its own order into the garden. The weeds may be the other, those who do not fit the humanly prescribed order of things.

In liquid modernity, Bauman argues, we are hunters, pursuing short term objectives, in loneliness, while the overall balance of things is ignored. The hunter may be vaguely aware of unsustainability, but that is pushed to a distant future, in the pursuit of immediate gratification. Here is a world of fierce competition; the cultures of the gamekeeper and gardener have been disparaged and deregulated in a war of each against the other. These metaphors are powerful: they fuel our imagination and attract or repel us, evoking our own epistemology, our ongoing 'formation'. They entail different understandings of the place and nature of education. It is why dialogue is important; sharing our metaphors, interrogating them, is a revelation of our deepest values, emotions, ideas and differences. We seek to avoid any reification of liquid modernity, or of perspectives, or of other concepts for that matter: perspectives like Bauman's can enhance dialogue, between us and beyond, rather than provoke warfare.

Progress and knowledge, once pillars of solid modernity, have weakened and even imply danger and potential disaster. What matters is survival and living for the moment rather than a lifetime's improvement:

transformation, of any meaningful kind, dissipates under the gaze of immediate pressures. We can be terrified of exclusion, because of our incapacity to learn quickly and consume essential life-style choices. We risk entering an underclass of losers. This is the territory of dystopia, of the consumer-orientated, cultivation of discontent. Upward mobility has ossified in countries like Britain, the United States and Italy, as the threat of moving downwards increases. Bauman (2005a) himself observes, using findings from the US, that 74% of students attending the most prestigious colleges come from the top-income quarter of society, but only 3% from the bottom. In a growing number of countries, the education system has turned into a mechanism for the reproduction of privilege and deprivation (Bauman 2012). The lot of the losers, the poor and marginalised, might include the occasional riot or rebellion but often degenerates into drug addiction or incarceration.

Moreover, the consumerist fantasy of becoming someone else, has replaced the idea of salvation or redemption. We once accused God when things went wrong (and many still do), but now have only ourselves to blame. We can become what we want to, but then are blamed or blame ourselves for failure. Further, consumerism does not appear to have made 'people' any happier, or better. In fact, narcissism, or self-worship, is a new fragile god because we face an infinity of choices without necessarily trusting any. Changing our image and dress and other wrappings is the 'utopia' of the hunters. The search for new appearance becomes seductive, but there is never an end to the pursuit, only impermanence, fleeting satisfaction, and, perhaps, the occasional bliss of a kill.

Lifelong learning might itself be driven by hunters, in search of a quick fix, a new job, a changed lifestyle or set of relationships. Educators, teachers, coaches, counsellors, like ourselves, are pressured to buy into the new dystopia or 'halbbildung'/half education in Adorno's (1972) terms. This is a state of adaptation, and collusion with, rather than challenge to, the hegemonic discourse. The ancient heteronomy of the Church is replaced by that of the market, with acceptance of the world as a given, where there is no alternative (Gaitanidis 2012). The market has invaded the academy as students demand easily assimilated products, especially when paying high fees for the privilege, even if the

outcome is one of dissatisfaction. Bauman (2005a) reminds us of the importance of time in which to create and experiment, using well-tested recipes, in contrast to fast food and small bites that are quickly digested. We can feel empty, dissatisfied and even poisoned because of agri-industry. Education, in Bauman's view, becomes like fast food.

Bauman's biography provides clues as to what may be an overly negative reading of contemporary experience. He was a Polish Jew, born in Poznan in Western Poland, to a family of limited economic means. He held his father in great esteem as a self-made man, an autodidact, who never went to any schools but learnt several languages and was an avid reader (Bunting 2003). Bauman was attracted to Marxism which he studied in the Polish division of the Red Army, in Soviet Russia, as a teenager. A kind of moral critique and angry compassion fuelled his enthusiasm as a young Communist in the 1940s and 1950s, as Poland was rebuilt out of the devastation of the Second World War (Bunting 2003). But he became disillusioned with Soviet Communism when working as an academic at the University of Warsaw. Bauman has been considered, like Kafka and Freud, to be the outsider who illuminates the ambivalence of modernity, from a marginalised perspective. The conviction of perpetual progress in western societies and of a solid core to modernity was a Pyrrhic victory. Like Kafka and Freud, Bauman identified the ambivalence as well as the uncertain fluidity of later modernity.

Bauman emphases the stressful burdens of responsibility that fluid modernity places on the individual—traditional patterns are replaced by self-chosen ones. Entry into the globalized society is open to anyone with their own stance and ability to fund it, or aspiration to a different life style, like travellers in the old-fashioned caravanserai. The result is a new normative, nomadic mindset which emphasises movement rather than staying-on; everything is always provisional, in lieu of permanent (or 'solid') commitment. People can be led astray, trapped in a prison of perpetual movement, in search of new stimulation. We can all be discontented nomads now.

Bauman seeks to document and interpret the alienation of progress, based on false cumulative instability, and a tendency towards creating unbearable human suffering and injustice. The Holocaust in these

terms was, for him, the nadir of a whole tendency rather than an aber-ration. Late modernity consists of shape shifting movements of capital and labour; but this began in an apparently solid modernity—and here Bauman's Jewishness could be especially pronounced. Modernity sought to eliminate any element, or indeed weeds, that threatened the mani-cured garden of progress (Lee 2005). There was the urge in moderni-ty's idea of progress to rationally escape from the messiness of the actual lifeworld, 'creating a new, encompassing order', which included the project we call education. The idea that well-planned education could be a main instrument for the creation of the perfect world became in effect pathological, a kind of splitting off what was other and very dan-gerous in consequence. Jewish people paid a terrible price, in Bauman's view, for modernity's desire to make things rational, 'tidy' and ordered (Bauman 2000). Jews were the 'weeds' to be eradicated in the well-tended manicured garden of progress.

Bauman Meets Bateson: Is It Still Possible to Learn How to Learn?

As researchers in adult education, we owe much to Bauman's reading of the contemporary human condition. We feel, however, that a critical read-ing of his work is essential, to include his perspective on education (Best 2017). In fact, his contribution to the theory and practice of education is unclear, since he never explained how educators, themselves part of liq-uid modernity, might encourage questioning and reflexivity in learners. Resistance is possible, he states, and does not abandon the progressive project. 'Quietism' and failure to speak out is the worst crime, he insists. But how to nurture this in the classroom is a big question. Moreover, we wonder if good enough space has ever been ubiquitous, in which to think, feel and speak out? It is the task of education, or at least those who seek to create transformative experiences, to continue to struggle with how best to create diverse questioning, and challenges to oppression, in relatively open, spontaneous and reflexive ways; even when going against the grain.

Bauman's perspective is also sociological, and he takes a grand view of history. Maybe it is overly determinist. 'External' conditions act on

human agents as objective processes, existing out there, uniform and coherent, which is not the case when we look from a closer auto/biographical and embodied perspective. He imposes a narrative of 'liquefaction', and the metaphors of gamekeeping, gardening and hunting on diverse human actions, complex thoughts and emotions. This, paradoxically carries the risk of reinforcing the idea of a powerless and of people barely able to cope. There is a danger that liquid modernity becomes an impenetrable discourse in its own right, a saturated master story, that blinds us to other possibilities and perspectives.

Bauman does not celebrate either liquid or solid modernity and is deeply critical of both. He speaks of the importance of a kind of interregnum between the two, as we struggle to find our way (Best 2017). What is best, he wonders, the Scylla of social engineering and institutionalized education, or the Charybdis of privatized and individualized knowing and learning? Interestingly, Bauman (2003) describes his experience, as a student, when presented with opposing and competing theories (as Laura did, in Chapter 1). The feeling remains, both for Bauman and her, of being rooted in similar overly abstract assumptions: a cognitive urge for satisfaction, bringing the promise of meaning and fuller consciousness. Both learned that form—order, explanation, context, meaning—is necessary to interpret the regularities and patterns of reality. In solid modernity, this essential regularity of the world was not challenged, nor was the possibility of finding solid epistemological ground. Education was considered a product, largely, of (already existing) knowledge, to be delivered to learners, rather than any process of collaborative knowledge making. The transition to liquid modernity and certain features of contemporary epistemology, are in fact redolent with possibility, rather than a source of inevitable doom.

Bauman (2003) reveals his discomfort at how psychologists used animal behaviour to explain human action. Like the experimental rat, students had to learn their position in the world and what was expected of them; they were then rewarded for following predicted paths. Bauman is a man of solid modernity who seeks to understand changing cultures yet cannot escape his own perspectival frame. None of us can. If the gift to humanity we call 'memory', or tradition, is now problematised, could other human capabilities—choice, reflexivity, self-positioning and

the capacity for dialogue—come to the fore. Maybe these are gifts that deserve greater praise and cultivation. This could be a prime focus for contemporary education.

Bauman (2012) himself stresses the imperative of active citizenship and dialogue, to enhance the possibility of reciprocal understanding, co-existence and collaboration with the other. But if we are faced with an 'unending succession of new beginnings, moved more by a swift forgetting of the previously acquired knowledge than by an acquisition of new knowledge' (Bauman 2005b, p. 313), this challenges those of us educated in a relatively solid modernity, to exercise our imaginations and creativity, and to challenge and change our own habits, as well as reframe education's purpose, including the 'ability to disassemble and rearrange' (Bauman 2012, p. 13). More attention might have to be given to emotions, to the unconscious and otherness within, and to cultivation and preservation of wilderness as a place of experimental abundance in which diverse 'weeds' can also thrive.

Bauman refers to Gregory Bateson's work (Bauman 2005a, pp. 312–313). Bateson was a British anthropologist and communicator who developed a theory of learning, some 30 years before Bauman (see Bateson 1942, 1964, 1970). He interrogated the epistemological issues of 'form, substance, and difference' (1970), entailed by biological evolution, as well as through our contact with other cultures, in fulsome communication or pathology. Bateson's ideas inspired Laura's work, and various themes in our book; the meeting of these two men's perspectives can help us develop deeper insight into form, formlessness and transformation. Bauman's interpretation of Bateson is partial: there are insights alongside misunderstanding, due to different epistemologies and backgrounds. Bateson was trained as a natural scientist and driven by curiosity and concern for the delicate equilibrium between biological and cultural evolution (Bateson 1972, 1979). Illuminating the 'pattern which connects' was the main object of his research (Formenti 2018). He was worried about the anti-ecological effects of disorganisation and disconnection, and concerned, like Bauman, at a drift into fragmentation and violence, in societies facing disruptive challenges.

Bauman in fact misinterpreted Bateson's theory of learning, when arguing that the dismantling of previously learned cognitive frames

makes learners weaker, like plankton, tossed hither and thither on random waves. Bateson was more curious and matter-of-fact, than judgmental, when he stressed (1942) that proto-learning (later called by him Learning I) is always accompanied by deutero-learning (or learning to learn, or Learning II): we do not only learn about contents and objects (as in theories learned at university), but we learn—often implicitly—about context, and the meanings of our relationships to objects and knowledge; how in other words we form mental habits, identities, epistemologies, and the meaning of knowing in our lives.

We develop these ideas extensively in Chapter 7; it is sufficient for now to state that first-degree learning is a basic capacity within any organism to adapt to incoming information (it requires an even more fundamental capacity to respond to incoming information, at level 0). Such capacity is necessary for life. Second-degree learning is necessary too—important for our complex nervous system. It has a kind of existential rationale: Deutero-learning gives *form* to the world and ourselves, creating meaning and highlighting assumptions that can then be taken for granted (at least, until new ones impose themselves). Moreover, to learn at this more abstract level, we are not obliged to begin again, by trial and error, from zero, in the face of new experience. Memory *is*, after all, a basis for learning and survival; and homo sapiens, unlike other animals, have the capacity to frame our knowledge, and ways of knowing, and to share it with others as well as augment it technologically. In Bateson's view, deutero-learning is useful as well as binding. It brings order out of potential chaos.

But how then can we change habits of mind when they reveal themselves to be redundant? In fact, if they become too fixed, creativity is blocked, new problems cannot be tackled, and culture dies. So, all cultures and individuals have the capacity to change their assumptions, substituting them with new ones, as and when needed. It is a basic feature of human life. We can learn how to do this, and change, including, in rare cases, the manner, rhythm, and intensity of deutero-learning. We can learn how to change our habits, our subjectivity, our worldview, as well as our relationship to knowing, or epistemology. This is Bateson's Learning III (1964), or what Bauman calls 'tertiary learning'.

Yet, Bauman's warning is real: in a world where we are constantly asked to learn 'how to break the regularity, how to get free from habits […] to rearrange fragmentary experiences into heretofore unfamiliar patterns' (Bauman 2001, p. 125), tertiary learning becomes the rule and can even be 'a pathological growth or a portent of advancing schizophrenia' (2001, p. 127). If it prevails over deutero-learning, our capacity to grasp context and meaning is threatened. So, it is a matter of establishing some re-equilibrium in our lives.

Bateson died in 1980 and his theory was developed in a world where the volatile and brief life of an individual was inscribed in a relatively stable and long-lasting society. The trouble, Bauman insists, is that nowadays such a world has disappeared, and the relationship is reversed. There is the longish life dedicated to survival in frail and volatile settings, through an endless series of new beginnings. Maybe this marks the end of education as we have tended to perceive it, aimed at equipping participants for an unchanging world. Education becomes instead a series of projects, shaped by local situations, needing constant and costly monitoring, in which we endlessly struggle to find completeness or cohesion. Or there can be a different story, another perspective, in which complexity, inside and out there, is managed in new ways; giving it more provisional forms and accepting we do not control anything.

Bateson's theory of learning is not, Laura insists, about people finding secure foundations from which to learn how to learn. It is about learning that there is no 'definitive foundation', or fixed form, not even in ourselves, because we are living organisms, co-evolving with our environments. Such perspectives, building on Bateson, were developed further by second order cybernetics and self-organisation theories (see Chapter 7). His theory entails instability and oscillation, as parts of the processes of formation, which could partly explain why his ideas were not well received in the modernist mainstream. Maybe he was also struggling with the rhythms of life and knowledge creation. He wrote a letter to his daughter Mary Catherine (1977) in which he questioned the possibility of knowing the complexity of ourselves within larger systems, and even of learning to learn; but his answer was not nihilism. But there are, he insisted, structures of repetition and interdependence, in an ever-changing world. There is co-evolution too, based on

interaction between organisms and their environment. This process can stabilize some forms, for a while, or disrupt them; the living can survive or die. New generations perhaps will internalise a different world-view, where shifting forms are the rule not a disaster, and where ecological sensitivity is enhanced. This requires us to be curious about possibilities as well as discontents.

Challenges for Education: Giddens and Morin

Bateson is suspicious of those social scientists who believe their ideas can and should be used to change human behaviour, or whole societies. On the contrary, for a systemic thinker, the only prescription is a continuing curiosity. If a certain idea is anti-ecological, why is it still used and not abandoned? If consumerism is killing our environment, hence ourselves, why do we continue to act in such ways? What is driving our culture to death? Bauman however, could be justified in insisting that information and knowing are too widely offered and consumed in small bites, like fast food. Menus are prepared too rapidly and eaten on the spot, rather than meticulously prepared and laboriously cooked, interspersed with times of rest and savour. Good teaching—and the deep, slow, reflexive digestion of experience, and mediated knowledge—is often replaced by teaching to tests or the supplier/consumer metaphor of the educational shopping mall. But this is not inevitable and can be subverted.

How then might educators and learners walk 'in quicksands' (Bauman 2005b), and subvert the zeitgeist? Maybe by taking care, in new forms of agency and subjective reflexivity, as well as through reciprocity and deepening dialogue. Words like these could offer a new lexicon to guide our thinking and action. We should also learn to welcome difference, to remain open and curious in its wake, and seek to build conversations, as well as consider why we can feel threatened. Deutero-learning, or learning to learn, can enter the lexicon, too, with a focus on relationships as well as on content, emotions as well as cognition, the unconscious as well as consciousness, and the importance of wild, untidy space as well as cultivation.

Solid modernity was based on the fear of cultural and perspectival diversity: the 'gardening state' built strong borders and often eradicated weeds. Best (2017) wonders about the hostility towards difference, and questions how and why some plants get defined as strangers or uninvited guests. This is not only social, but epistemological. Difference in the academy can be refused, the mainstream over praised, and alternative perspectives regarded as a threat or competitors. Cultural and epistemological hybridisation can be a source of inspiration, enrichment, creativity, and imaginative movement rather than terror. If we look around us in academia or the wider world, the dominant emotion towards new ideas has often been indifference, and occasional bursts of outrage. But it need not be so.

There can be new forms of imaginative togetherness—a cultural, academic and psychological 'we' that contains rather than expels otherness; and enhances our ability to engage with each other, including the 'weeds' within ourselves. Such a 'we', both inside and outside ourselves, would probably require new qualities of hybrid space, to sustain the capacity to think beyond existing cultural and psychological frames, and to cross boundaries; of knowledge, language and belief, rigid categories of male and female, hetero or homosexual, caring and questioning, therapy and knowledge, the material and spiritual. The world need not be as we have been taught, and we can learn in creative, collaborative, border crossing, boundary challenging as well as loving ways, in the company of others.

As academics, we struggle to achieve some of the above: we internalise antagonistic, dis-connecting either or polemic; we divide ourselves into sociologists or psychologists, psychoanalysts or systemic thinkers. How can we trust someone who is different, whose knowledge and ideas might challenge our perspective, and the way we hold ourselves and the world together? Dialogue may be desirable but often fails. It seems to require individual and collective understanding of the defences ranged against it. Another difficulty might be cultural disillusionment. Psychoanalysis transformed the world into a text that needed to be interpreted, and it challenged any prohibition to asking questions at all (Lee 2005). Our lot maybe is to feel perpetually disillusioned in the absence of certainty. To create dialogue requires hope, while curiosity

might different to some forms of questioning. It could depend on the nature of the spirit underling the question.

Anthony Giddens (1991, 1999), also a sociologist, offers an optimistic perspective. There is lifelong and lifewide educational possibility in the fracture of the old, as inherited family templates weaken. It demands and encourages reflexive awareness, and the engagement of everyone, in a sort of perpetual life politics. Even those opting out or feeling rejected in the wastelands of neo-liberalism, must decide what to do or think, when there is no confident reference to the past. (Of course, people can sink into depression, the defensiveness of racism or the emojis of Facebook and Twitter.) But there are opportunities for marginalised groups to imagine themselves in new ways. Giddens accepts some of Bauman's characterisations of profound changes in cultural and social life, including heightened superficiality, consumerism, and so on. But the important contrast, for Giddens, is between pre-modern (traditional) culture and modern (post-traditional) culture. Giddens points to the importance of what he calls the democracy of the emotions in cultivating positive change, deeper forms of reflexivity and agency, in diverse 'therapeutic' and educational spaces (Giddens 1999). We, as he has begun to do, will plot more of these spaces and consider how the spirit of equality, fraternity, reciprocity, respectfulness and dialogue are best cultivated.

The French sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin (1999), an advocate of complexity, thinks the Twentieth Century brought the gift of uncertainty to humanity, alongside freedom and choice, which creates new tasks for education. In the West, some of us, at least, are relatively free from older normative pressures of religion, ideology, paternalism, colonialism, and the pervasive structuring forces of class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality. We have become nomads in our movement across cultures, sub-cultures and ways of seeing. As academics, nomadism can be liberating and a source of creativity; for others, it is more often a nightmare, like for many African migrants in the city of Milan. Nomadism, of any meaningful kind, is frequently the property of elites, flitting from place to place, and hiding themselves in secure compounds (such as academic conferences); citizens of the world, or nowhere. For the grand majority, the prospect can seem a cruel

delusion. But space can be created for nomadic imaginations in everyday social, political and educational life, as we will chronicle. It includes the capacity to imagine ourselves in the shoes of the other. We chronicle some of this optimism, alongside the pessimism, in succeeding chapters.

Ways Forward

Stephen Frosh (1991), like Giddens, offers hope beyond the pessimistic quagmire. He writes that the construction of a personal, agentic, learning self is an immense act of courage, no less—rather than a given—in the chaotic debris of modern experience. Its realisation requires good enough relational space to weave together, creatively, what is worthwhile from the flotsam and jetsam of contemporary existence. Self-formation, in these terms, like education, may have lost some of its confident moorings, but we can still become authors of our lives, to greater or lesser extents. Liquid modernity is not as monolithic as Bauman suggests. If we are cut adrift, stereotyped and unable to influence large scale political or corporate agendas, there remain spaces in which to make a life on more of our own terms. There are many young people as well as adults, in diverse ecological and social movements, seizing and creating spaces to do precisely this.

Reviewing Bauman's work, Scott McLemee (2012) suggests that things of permanence—friendships, relationships, good literature and aspects of the humanities—can remain of abiding value. Research on the micro and meso-level reveals strong, as well as weak, bonds. Laura has observed, in studying the family, that a longing for safe havens, an encompassing, caring network of relationships is stronger than ever, and people continue to struggle towards this rather than giving up (Formenti 2011b). Linden's research illuminates how non-traditional learners in universities, from the margins of society, find resources of hope in ideas, literature, people and relationships that enable them to exploit some of the possibilities of the liquid world, in courageous ways (West 1996; Finnegan et al. 2014).

So, the composition or formation of selves, in relationship and hybridity, might be one royal road to transformation and a fundamental

challenge to the times in which we live. A challenge too for any lifelong learning worthy of the name; and the means to an end for a reinvigorated, reimagined adult and university education. Survival is constantly threatened by startling forces with the power to turn everything upside down or drown us in an economic and cultural tsunami. But we can learn, with others, to survive the monstrous aggressions of the world, and to take care of ourselves and our planet's fragilities. Especially when we recognise, perhaps, that many of the 'aggressions' and some of the care-less-ness is of our own making. This is the territory of lifelong, life-wide, and profounder forms of learning, which psychoanalysis takes as a prime object of interest, including how and why we defend against it.

3

On Perspective

Introduction

The first ever Conference of the new ESREA Network, 'Interrogating Transformative Processes in Learning and Education', took place in 2014, in Athens, Greece. The Network's name was significant—distinct from the largely North American Transformative Learning Conference. It reflected a debate among the conveners, about its identity: there was Linden, along with Anna Laros from Germany, Alexis Kokkos from Greece and Michel Alhadeff-Jones from Switzerland. At times the debate was intense and even conflictual. Are 'transformative processes' worthy of study, and if so, do they provide a sufficient rationale for a new network? Was the European Network too closely linked to the North American Conferences and Jack Mezirow's work? Was there a danger that long standing, theoretically rich European perspectives on adult education and struggles for change and social justice, would be colonised by North America's arguably more individualistic perspectives? But the desire to further dialogue and collaboration between European and North American scholars was strong (Formenti and

Dirkx 2014; Laros et al. 2107), and the new Network sought to bring different ways of seeing into play, including within Europe itself.

There is perhaps, we should add, a more pessimistic streak within European thinking about education. Pre-eminently represented by psychoanalysis, which constantly reminds us of how difficult change and self-transformation can be. This can sit awkwardly with the 'can do' cultural and educational optimism of some in North America. Maybe European history and thought are more influenced by the darker sides of human experience, shaped by the last century's barbaric wars and the recent rise of xenophobia and nationalism. Many Americans left Europe to leave old and destructive ways behind, however illusorily, given slavery and the treatment of indigenous peoples. The spirit of American exceptionalism, notwithstanding, remains strong. The idea that people can transform their lives on more of their own terms, still resonates, despite or because of the rise of the alt-right and the waning of American power. There can also be ignorance towards European perspectives on adult education as well as vice versa. Mezirow and his compatriots, in these terms, risk dismissal without being read.

When we began our present dialogue, the intention was to make use of North American ideas on perspective transformation, emanating from Mezirow and other scholars who have added greatly to his ideas; or those who have developed different perspectives on transformative learning. Our pilgrimage was similarly to encompass an engagement with various strands of European thinking. Like the rich German tradition of Bildung, in which the cultivation of self is a never-ending process of interrogation, critically assessing and contextualizing knowledge, and coming to see anew. If this is close to Mezirow, it is more philosophically grounded (Fuhr 2017). There is the French idea of *formation* (very similar to *formazione* in Italian), which, as noted, plays with a metaphor of forming, shaping as well as changing. The shaping and making of knowledgeable and enlightened subjects is an idea reaching back to Plato's paideia and ancient philosophical schools. It is an expression of philosophy as a way of life, an inquiry into self and the world, and even a therapy for the soul (Hadot 2002).

Linden's work has focused on auto/biographical processes in learning, education and struggles for self and human agency. He has dialogued over many years with the German sociologist and biographical researcher Peter Alheit. Alheit has been sceptical about transformative learning, at least when reduced to changes in mind set. Drawing on sociology, he argues that people experience contradictory imperatives in late modernity: they can seek to make their own lives, on more of their own terms, but never in conditions of their own choosing. They can be enmeshed in material constraints—of poverty, barely getting by, or structural forces like unemployment, or sudden illness and breakdowns in relationship, experienced as beyond their control. They may be constrained by classed or gendered perspectives, too, including the idea that education is not for them. Alheit and Dausien (2000) have coined the term *biographicity* as a struggle to compose a life, however minimally, on more of our own terms, in deeply contradictory contexts. Biographicity encompasses experience and reflexivity, and a potential for self-positioning. But it is a struggle against forces often beyond our individual control. This might be a more realistic, pessimistic and certainly contextual reading of struggles to change.

So, to meet with Jack Mezirow and his theory of transformative learning, and to engage with the key ideas of 'perspective transformation' and 'disorienting dilemmas'. We illuminate what these terms mean and celebrate their potential for inspiring adult education theory and practice. We are guided by the metaphoric spirit of 'perspective', emerging from the arts, opening ourselves to Mezirow's ideas, alongside those of other potential friends and guides. We begin by tracking the origins of 'perspective transformation', and its hidden assumptions, developed in Mezirow's research on adult returners at university. Reflection, for him, was an act of examining and assessing the validity of one's knowledge (Mezirow 2000). We digress, for a while, into epistemology, to highlight the cultural, embodied as well as embedded origins of the idea of 'perspective' as a visual, realist, and humanistic metaphor. However, this can be overly narrow, un-self-aware, and marginalise other ways of seeing.

Transformative Learning as a Theory and Community: A Compositional Reading

There is a connection between seeing and acting, theory and praxis, in Mezirow's philosophy of education. It makes his work incredibly fertile. His introduction to perspective transformation aims to foster richer, more coherent, satisfying and deliberative processes in the praxis of adult education. He is committed to action, to connecting theory and intervention, researchers and professionals. This is very visible in how the transformative learning community and its conferences have developed in the United States.

Perspective transformation inspires ways of acting which include feedback on self. The relationship is circular, a kind of experimental loop. To fully understand transformative learning, as a phenomenon, as both theory and practice, we must examine its political, social, psychological as well as practical effects. What we perceive is a huge, diverse, and growing literature, and the development of new practices, building on Mezirow's ideas (Taylor et al. 2012). The rapid evolution is rooted—surprisingly for us—in diversity rather than orthodoxy, fuelling discussion, struggle, internal and external critique, and intense debate. Most participants recognise tensions and the need to open issues to rich and lively dialogue (Taylor et al. 2012). This has happened inside the transformative learning community (if it is a community at all, given the diverse people and theories) and in its relationships to the wider educational world. Scholars like Stephen Brookfield, are part of the community and raise challenging questions about theory and practice. He insists that the task of adult education is to challenge dominant and oppressive ideologies and to create space for emancipatory practice, if transformative learning is to have any substance and meaning, beyond being an empty signifier (Brookfield 2000, 2010). This is far more social and ideological than individualistic.

More radically, outsiders question the very legitimacy of the term transformative learning. Michael Newman (2012), in his paper '*Calling Transformative Learning into Question: Some Mutinous Thoughts*' asked if we needed a category called 'transformative learning' at all, due both to its 'flaws', but also because it is tautological, only reiterating what

'good learning' is. This demonstrates how the theory has had a direct and indirect impact, positive and negative, and at points in-between. The flourishing of publications, conferences, and practices of transformative learning and education is evident and energising. Except the discussion has often been restricted to the Anglosphere, tending to exclude other cultures, language communities and continents. This might of course simply be a question of time, since in countries like Italy, there is a tendency to join the mainstream late in the day. But this is also how cultural colonization works, and it is a problem if 'new ideas' are introduced as superior mantras in the knowledge market, concerned with promoting authors and books rather than encouraging dialogue.

As Europeans, we are aware of different responses to transformative learning among European scholars and practitioners. Alexis Kokkos (2010, 2017) offers one European way of engaging with transformative learning, based on an analysis of papers written by European scholars. He is convinced that the power and potential of transformative learning can serve as a reinforcement of the worldwide network of those who care for an adult education that strives for human emancipation. Ironically, this argument can also be read as an 'American colonization' of the European academy, including the dominance of the English language!

Kokkos has generated many insights: there is a tendency in papers to use references to Mezirow but to neglect dozens of other scholars who developed his work. There is insufficient acknowledgement in Europe as well as the US of a plurality of strands and the evolution of theory (Tisdell 2012). A global appraisal of theory is underway, involving diverse scholars (see Cranton and Taylor 2012). But Kokkos suggests that specific concepts like perspective transformation, or disorienting dilemmas, are often integrated into other theoretical frameworks or approaches—on learning processes, social change, workplace learning, and so on—with insufficient grounding in the available transformative learning literature. The dominant trend in Europe is to avoid much engagement with 'the very nature and the applications of the transformative learning theory' (Kokkos 2012, p. 295). Avoidance encompasses, we add, the contributions of diverse women like Patricia Cranton, Libby Tisdell, Mary Field Belenky, Ann Stanton, Kathleen Taylor,

Victoria Marsick or Elizabeth Kasl. They have developed more relational, narrative and spiritual perspectives on transformative learning, building on Mezirow's inspiration.

Another important dimension often missing in European understanding is the legacy of American pragmatism. This emphasises the importance of constant experiment in a struggle to create better or more beautiful social forms. In seeking for instance to democratise organisations, we must experiment, tinker, change and try again. Constant experiment, learning from mistakes and deliberately seeking new information is fundamental to the process. The point of pragmatism is aesthetic: to increase beauty in the world. The well-lived life is a beautiful and creative composition (Brookfield 2016). This search for beauty in practice, in both social and personal forms, is often neglected in Europe in favour of more abstract philosophising. US colleagues have sought stronger links between academic and professional worlds, under the inspiration of pragmatism.

Kokkos' work also confirms that European scholars of adult education use a panoply of thinkers outside the 'field' of educational studies—such as Adorno, Althusser, Bakhtin, Bateson, Bourdieu, Foucault, Giroux, Gramsci, Habermas, Heron, Honneth, Horkheimer, Marx, Morin, and others—to build interpretations of adult education and learning. Auto/biographical narrative research can sit awkwardly in relation to some European theory; instead of using ready-made concepts to explain phenomena, such research tends towards creating deeper forms of interpretation of the particular, seeking a satisfying theory of a complex phenomenon, and then to enhance practice. The spirit of North American pragmatism fits well, in such terms, with our kind of research: we too look for manifestations of beauty (and its enemies) in everyday experience, at both a social and individual level.

Perspective Transformation in Mezirow's Work

In introducing his seminal book *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, Jack Mezirow (1991) listed four events that encouraged his interest in perspective change. All of them were biographically rooted:

his epistemological positioning—or relationship to knowing—was personal, self-aware, self-interrogating. There is no abstract theory, disconnected from the man and his values, or his engagement with the world. A theory becomes satisfying, beautiful and alive when it corresponds to lived experience, and has semantic power. And when such theory links, in turn, to others' experiences, in different spaces, we may then encounter a pattern that connects.

The first event for Mezirow was a personal crisis—a 'disorienting dilemma', as he later termed it. He painfully realised (after reading Freire and Illich) that being an adult educator, and orientated, as he thought himself to be, towards social action, does not automatically mean you are 'good' and free from negative assumptions. You may be overly 'righteous' in the way you interpret and act in your role. There is a risk, a side-effect of any educational act, of reinforcing existing social forms and power dynamics, without realizing it. The first step towards emancipation is for the educator, before and together with the learners' emancipation, to emancipate him/herself. *Medice, cura te ipsum*: Physician, heal thyself, as we might frame it; educators, educate yourselves.

Biographical experience can offer moments to discover a critical dimension missing in our practice. It is the moment when we learn that you need a new theory, as Mezirow saw it. If he was to facilitate community development and build serious dialogue and learning in various contexts, he had to be more aware of his own positioning and power. This discovery, he informs us, shook his 'meaning perspectives', or 'ways of observing the world' (Mezirow 1991). It provoked an 'absorbing process' of learning, continuing over a long period. His experience reveals the extent to which *knowing* is embodied and real. It is not a purely cognitive act, or the result of reified, rational thinking. Mezirow was also aware that transformative learning is no sudden revolution, conversion, or superficial change of label, but needs time, and can be painful. As human beings we constantly desire some equilibrium, and we struggle to keep our (previous) ideas, and ways of being, even when they become demonstrably false. We want things to stay as they are and not to trouble us unduly.

*When I teach at university – says Laura – I frequently meet this resistance.
I still remember my first year and a student came to see me, she was irritated
for her low mark: 'I come from the best school, and had the best evaluation,
this is my first exam and I only got 18/30!'*
*'Let's understand together what happened here… there was a question you did
not answer to… Give your own definition of education and discuss it.'*
*'I know all the definitions. I have studied Comenius, Rousseau, Freire and
don Milani. I can tell you for each their idea of education. But I do not have
an idea of mine.'*
'If you know all these definitions, it is not difficult. You only need to think.'
'You have no right to ask me to think,'
*Teacher and student have different perspectives here, what I call 'sights' and
'postures'. The story shows how education can create monsters: students who
are trained to give the right answer will oppose any proposal to 'simply think'.*

Mezirow's second and third events were similarly personal. His wife
decided to return to university and *her* struggles, as well as achieve-
ments, and changes in lifestyle and identity, pushed him to become
more curious about adults who enter new worlds and struggle to per-
ceive differently. He conducted research, at a national level, into women
learners at university (Mezirow 1978). The research illuminated how
women enter university with their own positioning more or less clear:
they may have conventional attitudes, accepting common-sense defini-
tions of university education; and they can take for granted that they
do not know. Other learners are deeply engaged with disorienting
dilemmas in their lives, and their choice of an academic programme
is an implicit if tentative solution to problems. Third, they are already
partly emancipated as well as intentional learners, looking for confirma-
tion or a nuanced development of their perspective. Finally, there is a
group who are similarly self-aware, and interest driven, but more open
to transformation. The categorization offers a way of interpreting dif-
ferent positionings on entering university; and different ways of being
and seeing in the academy. Learning may be active or passive, strategic
or tactical, but always personal, bringing the imperative for institutions
to be reflexive about students' positioning. Mezirow realised that adult
education had to develop new categories and models to understand the
processes of re-positioning necessary to (re)learn a context, as well as

the contents of education. Perspective transformation, from the beginning—if latently—located learners in a context, which included their subjective positioning and desires.

From Content to Context

Laura sees a correspondence between Mezirow's four groups of learners (Mezirow 1978) and the four existential postures identified by Marie Christine Josso (2001). She engaged with groups of professionals in biographical workshops over many years at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. She invited them to examine their life experience in relation to learning, identity and education. Their written stories, analysed by the group, considered relationships to knowing, as a result of complex influences like social determinants, cultural roots, relational experience, unconscious and inner struggles, etc. They found four main existential positions of the learner in relation to knowing and learning: a conventional passive position (in French: *attente*); an active problem-solving position (*refuge*); a self-centred intentional position (*intentionnalité*); and a playful position of surrender (*lâcher-prise*).

What is entailed in both Mezirow's and Josso's findings is a shift in focus from content, abilities, and competence—towards attitudes, assumptions, self-positioning, and even identities. This is fundamental to learning and thinking 'like an adult' (Mezirow 2000). In other words, we move from content to context. We can consider the notion of 'perspective transformation' as a step towards a complex, context sensitive theory of learning, where adults (tend to) position themselves in varying ways to the contents of learning, and to learning itself, and towards educators, groups, and whole institutions. And for that matter, to perspectives of meaning, which can be hidden or latent in any educational encounter, whether on a course, in a research interview, or a less formal conversation.

Laura (Formenti 2017) has related Josso's existential positions to a systemic perspective. Educator-and-learner are engaged circularly in a dance of dynamic positioning. Each subjective position is the result of interaction, entailing a corresponding counter-position [counter-transference,

in psychoanalytic language] of the educator. This raises the issue of what kind of relationships are established in adult education? What relationship to knowing is sustained by the interplay of good enough positioning? How does the position of the teacher influence the position of the student, and vice versa? And how does the context contribute to or shape the dance? These questions encourage us to think about our own perspectives on education: as profoundly relational, interactive, interdependent and auto/biographical. Mezirow may be too individualistic in such terms.

The conventional relationship in the academy is based on the passive learner who mirrors a very active and powerful educator/teacher; the two confirm—together—a traditional linear relationship in diverse contexts and organizations, where verticality and communication-as-transmission are the rule. The relationship to knowing is vertical, formal, and the learner is in a certain sense subjugated.

The position of refuge, the second in Josso's taxonomy, entails a coach or a problem solver taking charge of guidance as well as processes of resolution and/or technical learning; it requires a quality of relationship where the learner becomes more active, yet also obedient and even objectified, while the relationship to knowing is instrumental. The third position is based on self-awareness and intentionality, which are strongly valued in contemporary adult education (think about andragogy, client centred learning, etc.). It requires more of the listening educator, someone able and willing to recognize the learner's values and interests in a potential dance of desire and freedom. In a certain sense, a 'good enough' parental figure who encourages playfulness. But playfulness is a step forward from intentionality: the adult who knows his/her interests and only follows conscious purpose can get stuck in learning; maybe she is too content with what she finds and is insufficiently challenged to go further. This is where the fourth position (*lâcher-prise* literally meaning releasing one's grip, letting go) comes into play: learning to learn when exiting a comfort zone, finding new creative expressions of self, necessitating deeper change in our relationship to knowing. The awareness of interdependence also brings greater openness, reciprocity and surrender. There is shared playfulness and recognition of vulnerability too. These are deeply interpersonal, often unconsciously challenging processes.

Such a perspective is at the heart of Linden's work on adult learner motivation, in the potentially transitional space of a university; a space pregnant with possibilities for self-negotiation but also riddled with doubt and defensiveness. A space where we can feel understood and legitimate in the eyes of significant others like a teacher or respected fellow student; or feel misrecognised and bereft. Changing qualities of relationships are essential to any wholehearted play in learning; or in claiming space to dance with new partners and ideas, thus creating new possibilities for self. The dance or play can take the form of new relationships with fictional characters in literature, or a body of theory, which, through processes of projective identification, speak to us at a deep psychological and existential level, offering resources of hope in struggles to transform. But it can be a hard-won victory with much pain, loss and failure, alongside beauty, in the struggle (West 1996).

Such illumination suggests two possible shifts in theory. The first is from categorisation to positioning. Taxonomies are always problematic: how can we 'diagnose' someone as being passive or intentional? Nobody is like this, without context. So, an individual is not 'a specific kind' of learner but takes a position in the present, shaped by her previous story as well as imagined future. The second is from individualism to relationalism, combining the subjective view of each actor with a relational appreciation of what transpires in the learning process. We then require a more contextual analysis of institutions and classrooms: what kind of organization, roles, gestures, rituals, discourses, perspectives as well as relational qualities are in play? How might they evolve, in the interests of transformative experience (as against the rote learning of passing tests or achieving, pre-defined outcomes?). This is a central issue across our book.

A Therapeutic Learning?

Mezirow refers to a fourth biographical event that shaped his ideas: when working for a while with Roger Gould (Mezirow 1991), a psychiatrist. Gould sought to build connections between education and psychotherapy, using a 'therapeutic learning programme' aimed to enable learners to overcome constraints to learning, developed in earlier stages

of their lives. One of the most promising aspects of this was the potential re-connection between the present and past, conscious and unconscious process, cognition and emotion, learning and healing. Changes of perspective can be painful, scary, even terrifying. As we note later, many scholars are seeking to connect transformative learning theory to psychoanalysis, or depth psychology, to develop a more satisfying theory of emotion, embodied and shaping cognition. The word transformation might suggest an inner, deeper, psychic change, or soul work; and of changed relationships to self, others and otherness, including cognition.

Mezirow well understood that our meaning perspectives are often distorted or stuck. The distortions can be due to defence mechanisms. Linden takes his understanding of this from psychoanalysis, which has to do with either a more defensive orientation of self to the other and wider world, or a relative openness, both forged in early relationships (see Chapter 5). The defences include omniscience (I already know), or omnipotence (I can cope), which masks a fear of exposure, vulnerability or being found out and feeling ashamed. Laura draws on cybernetics and systems theory, namely von Foerster's notion of the observer as 'double blind' or unaware of what he/she cannot see, and also unaware of the blindness. 'Normal' perception is not conscious of its own dynamics. Hence, while education and therapy are not the same, both entail struggles, trauma, existential dilemmas and disorientation, before meaningful change is possible.

Transformative learning brings learners and educators to recognise their place and potential authorship in deeper change processes; and the need for new forms of knowledge and care in struggles to perceive differently. When an adult learner is living a transformation, emotional support is essential, as is recognition of the struggle. A good enough learning or transitional space, in the language of Donald Winnicott (1971) is required to play with the potential of a new idea, or to embrace a critical re-examination of assumptions, in manageable ways. It is not clear however whether Mezirow was keen to ask educators to develop counselling skills or care attitudes. It is significant that he speaks about Gould's project, and later engages somewhat minimally in a dialogue with John Dirkx (2006) about soul work, i.e. the unconscious and inner life, and even the role of the spiritual in adult learning.

Dirkx questions what he sees to be a continuing assumption that cognition is the fundamental vehicle in transformation. Drawing on Jung's depth psychology, he prefers to describe the process as soul work: as deeply defended ways of being in the world (maybe donning the persona of omnipotence, for example) which are then challenged by other parts of the psyche, in good educational encounters. Like the character called trickster, who pricks at pomposity and reveals aspects, maybe unwanted, of who we are, to ourselves as well as others. Within this Jungian perspective, there is a dynamic of individuation in play, a struggle to integrate split off or unwanted parts of ourselves, but we may actively resist the process.

A Practical Theory and Its Developments

Mezirow's theory was formulated for adult educators (Mezirow 1991). An educator himself, he wanted to highlight those learning conditions which build and sustain better educational practice. He claimed that education required a good integrated theory to avoid the tendency of educators to be glued to hidden assumptions, whether behaviourist or functionalist, shaped by naïve psychology or the tyrannies of common sense. The penchant for ideology and a preacher's attitude are, in fact, quite common in education. But a good enough educational theory must address our need for meaning, i.e. how we build, validate and reframe our ideas, and often defend against doing so. Humans not only develop a rationale for their experience; they learn how to do so. Interpretation is fundamental in learning.

Mezirow was pushed by experience to question the conditions for 'good enough' interpretation, or to compose a 'satisfying theory'; one able to sustain deliberate and deliberative action. Interpretation is not separable from praxis, it is a practice itself. Transformation of perspective becomes a process of transforming our ways of interpreting experience, and of making new meaning. Mezirow's relationship to theory was pragmatic. He sought to explain learning that worked, or made sense of complexity, and evoked desirable change. He was not interested so much in extending 'an existing intellectual theory or tradition' (1991, p. xiv);

rather in fostering theory to evoke better or more beautiful human action. His approach brought together different concepts, from varying backgrounds, probably irritating those scholars who look for flaws or incoherence. But they can miss the point, or the bigger picture: of celebrating what works educationally and is beautiful in its illuminate power.

Mezirow therefore provides a starting point for a diverse dialogue across difference. Ideas about perspective transformations have evolved, to include soul work, for instance. We return to this in Chapter 7. And to the spiritual dimensions of transformation, including the praxis of pilgrimage (Tisdell 2017; see Chapter 10); or to complexity and the temporal aspects of life and transformation (Alhadeff-Jones 2016), or critical theory (Chapter 4), or the role of art and the aesthetic (Chapter 9). We return to dialogue with such ideas and people, including psychoanalysis, in subsequent chapters. But first, we explore the idea of perspective itself.

Perspective: A Visual Metaphor

A basic assumption in transformative learning theory is that learning is rooted in observing and interpreting experience, and the engagement with new and challenging frames of reference. Struggles over meaning depend on the individual learner's perspective, while learning becomes a kind of collision of ways of seeing, or perspectives. But the question is begged as to what we mean by 'perspective'? And how individualistic existing and new ways of seeing might be. We note that perspective is a western invention, a particular form of representation and of thinking about the place of the observer in the process. Perspectives are deeply cultural: most obviously in the pre-Copernican world, with God and a divinely ordained 'order' at its core. Bauman's pre-modern period involved a gamekeeper operating within a social ethic of things being best when not interfered with, and the world perceived as 'a divine chain of being and has its rightful and useful place.' The post-Copernican, post-Reformation perspective puts the observer more at the centre, looking at the scene, and creating new versions of it, as a gardener.

There is now a power to determine and shape what is real. Culture is there when reifying the power of observation and scientific precision, alongside celebrating tidiness and perceptions of ordered beauty.

Perspective in the Renaissance, came to be regarded as a standard form of art (and thinking) devoted to the creation of realistic and believable scenes. In its most technical form, it was born early in 1400, when Filippo Brunelleschi—an architect and engineer living in Florence—designed a famous experiment that changed the course of the artistic Renaissance; and, according to certain historians, the intellectual perspectives of the western world (De Santillana 1959; Edgerton 1975). When we fix a single point of view, all the parallel lines appear to converge at some point in the distance, and all objects in the scene seem to follow the same rule. Brunelleschi was struck by this coherence and the feeling of plausibility produced by this way of drawing. So, he invented a device to demonstrate his insight, offering a standard systematic way to reproduce the identical experience, many times over—and in compelling form, for the proceeding centuries.

The experiment was simple (Fig. 3.1): he drew a very detailed copy—so exact as to fool the eye—of the Florentine Baptistery viewed from the portal of the Duomo. He drilled a small hole in the panel, to constrain the eye looking through it, to compare the drawing with the real building. They corresponded. The invention was immediately adopted by others, probably because some intuition of its potential power already existed, if not yet with the rigour and imagination required for precision. Human kind received a model to represent depth and reality, in bi-dimensional space. The observer became part of the philosophical invention. Perspective became a metaphor to represent human knowledge and how to improve ways of knowing.

None of which was achieved overnight, by a solitary person. History suggests that the Ancient Greeks—and later the Romans, in Pompeii—knew how to represent depth, to give plausibility to their paintings. But the idea of representation in the Middle Ages was more symbolic, metaphorical, less realistic. Brunelleschi, the architect, was fond of Rome, like many of his contemporaries; in a sense he understood that perspective was invented by civilizations using linear geometry to build their temples, as well as categorical language and rigorous thinking to develop
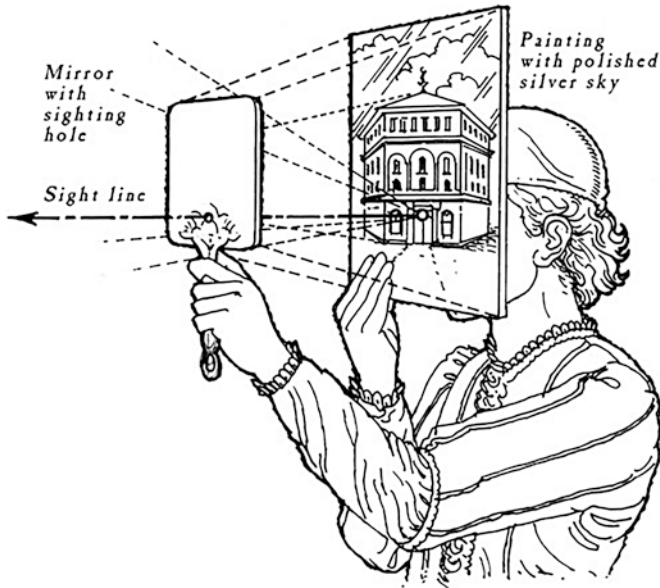
Fig. 3.1 Filippo Brunelleschi's experiment. https://maitaly.wordpress.com/

philosophy. Greece and Rome laid the foundations of a particular system of thought. Other cultures thought in and through different kinds of metaphor, including of the sacred.

Most references use the word 'discovery'—or 're-discovery'—when referring to the story of perspective (Derksen 1999). Invention would be a better word since it is not 'out there', but culturally inside us. Technical ability, mathematical knowledge and philosophical background are also required. This invention changed the representation of the world forever: it was taken up immediately by Masaccio (in 1427) to create 'The Holy Trinity', a huge fresco in Santa Maria Novella, another famous church in Florence. The holy figures are represented as real people, in a false room, with a vault ceiling painted to match the architecture of the church, hence creating the illusion of a real 3-dimensional space. It is easy to imagine the awe felt by spectators, when seeing Christ himself, God, and even a skeleton representing Adam, before their eyes, as 'real'.

Later, Alberti codified the method into a handbook (*De Pictura*, On Painting, 1435, dedicated to Filippo himself), so that artists who followed were encouraged to adopt the new perspective, or consciously resist it, for centuries. Perspective is key to any drawing or painting, in the tradition of western art and art training, while the public of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reacted negatively to art not following such rules. Perspective became a dominant practice and worldview; it contains both a stance on the meaning of art as well as an epistemological orientation. But what kind of knowledge is produced? What does it mean to reproduce 'reality'? What kind of observer is implicated in this form of knowing? It remains deeply cultural and has tended to exclude other ways of seeing. We may now be becoming more conscious of this and the colonising damage it can do.

The transformation of the socio-cultural context where Brunelleschi was living, what we call the Renaissance, began in the late 1200s (Cimabue and Giotto are key figures). It continued for at least 250 years: conventionally ending around 1550, when Michelangelo and Raphael brought it to its zenith. In painting, there was an imperative to give an Earthly or realistic setting for sacred figures: Giotto, Duccio da Boninsegna, Piero della Francesca painted saints and characters from the Bible as real people, even if their environment was not so literal. What kind of buildings, squares, rooms and furniture however might best surround those thick, monumental, fleshy bodies? The problem of verisimilitude—corresponding to *verum* or lifelikeness—of people and their surroundings was being raised.

In those 250 years, Italy was replete with paintings, mostly in churches, to provoke and sustain the popular imagination. What is now achieved through watching movies, television programmes and websites, was achieved then by going to church and fantasising about paintings, which were so attractive in their colours and evocative in the stories told. They were in a sense more real than real, and were drawn, using the right proportions and rules, to make them 'true', creating sensations, feelings, emotions, and enforcing conscious and unconscious reactions. A new narrative, collective theory of the world, and a method to create it, were forged. We should add that there were also images and frightening representations of Hell, and of a punishing God, to sustain

obedience to religious prescription and order. Imagery is often used to subjugate rather than liberate. Like the statues of the old American Confederacy and of former slave owners, used to convey the power and 'truth' of great men; and to stifle other stories, especially from the margins. As we write these sentences, we hear that statues of Columbus are being demolished in some communities in North America. We wonder if this iconoclasm can be potentially transformative? Maybe Western art represented more than was rationally understood, such as imperialist presumption and the denigration of the other.

Why have we made such a digression on the birth of perspective? Following Gregory Bateson, people 'think in stories', or through processes of 'abduction' (1979, pp. 157–159). Ideas are connected by wider and looser patterns than implied in rational and linear theories. Meanings have their roots in bodies, in the connotation of words, in the unconscious patterns ruling our language and culture. To know the origin of perspective puts the metaphor in a new light, leading us to question or become more aware of its limits.

We are so used to linear perspective as a representational system. We live in a culture that systematically draws on linear stories and takes for granted their meaning. *Prospicere* in Latin means 'to look ahead' and we are so used to thinking in a language of windows to offer the overview, if we stick our heads out. So, perspective, in the view of Erwin Panofsky (1991) is a kind of 'will to form', a pattern to connect the social, cognitive, psychological and technical practices of our culture, rendering it into an integrated coherent whole (or a manicured garden?). And yet, Panofsky warns, each epoch or culture has its own perceptual pattern or model. The 'panoptic' perspective, typical of modernity, goes beyond the mere technique of reproduction. It is a way of conceiving space, and the human beings who inhabit it. In the Renaissance, the relationship was symbolized by the eye, or better, a point of view. The Observer was invited to rule the space, to give order to objects, which in turn gave to the Observer power; here are the roots of modernity: *Homo faber suae fortunae;* man is the maker of his fortune. Space becomes rational, while universal mathematical rules govern it, with potentially no limit to our capacity to understand and tame our world.

Laura remembers the slow careful preparation of drawings, at school, with very precise, delicate lines, to be cancelled out later. Her first tentative sketches of simple objects like a cube, or a pyramid, led, at the age of fifteen, to the representation of an Old Roman Villa. How proud she was! An embodied experience, repeated in time (repetition is a core business in learning), and her frequent exposure to images was not only an initiation into art (as content), but an experience of deuterolearning, as Bateson defines the unconscious learning of forms, structures, meaning and contexts. A hidden curriculum, we could call it. Western art conveys the idea that the knower must take a position and define a horizon every time s/he is set to describe the 'real'. Yet this opens space, ironically, for the projection of our own cultural presuppositions, to the neglect of others.

All of which is relevant to composing any theory of transformative learning, since we are obliged to use words, and words never escape their relationship to metaphor, culture, context and bodies. In fact, our language is shaped by metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), while our theories can be understood as stories connecting metaphors through unconscious processes of abduction; and in the encounter between our data and the concepts we use. Following Lakoff and Johnson, all metaphors are related to embodied experience (1999), and new ones emerge when artists or academics perceive a difference between what they experience and what is claimed to be 'true'. Moreover, the perception of difference is based on action; perspective is an embodied practice, enacting a world: when we position ourselves as observers, in a certain sense, we bend reality to desire.

These reflections on the origins of perspective—as rule, practice and worldview—compel us towards deeper reflexivity in our relationship to knowing and the role of visual metaphors. It encourages new awareness that metaphor is far from neutral, and that we may be unconscious about our assumptions and projections. Perspective brings with it epistemological and ontological assumptions, and, potentially, a colonising story (especially in the Western world with its global reach, over two centuries and more). A solitary, privileged observer can be master of all surveyed, and can mould it in his or her own image. Gombrich (1982) asserts that the original reason for the new perspective was to give reality

and credibility to sacred events. But we can also read it as a de-sacralisation of religion, by bringing a concept of total 'truth' to bear, one that challenges the basic story itself and casts, in effect, the other as ignorant.

Berger (1972) highlights how the themes of money, power and possessions were communicated in Western art, beyond formal appearance. This is an old story: of Kings, Popes and later merchants buying and commissioning art to celebrate their power. Realism can create properties seemingly life like, you can almost touch them; and can also embody social oppression, and the enforcement of power as well as a particular world view. Perspective, as a new metaphor, provokes many dilemmas: 'reality' versus representation; subjectivity versus objectivity; freedom versus power; one world view versus many others. It can represent, in the transformative learning community, a kind of cognitive conversion, (mimicking perhaps the spiritual of earlier times), with new lives forged in the light of reason. But maybe the process is more contextual, auto/biographical, psychic, relational, narrative, conflictual and even transcendental, as well as cognitive, when we engage with the stories learners themselves tell.

A Footnote

When we look at a piece of art, we may see different things. This happens with any object, but art seems to have an especial power to raise dilemmas. In the first metalogue, Linden shared his view of the Pietà, and told a story of an encounter with the transcendental. Laura told a different story, about material and emergent qualities of an object. Our ways of seeing are different, but they illuminate common dilemmas in our culture, and show how subjectivity *and* objectivity,   the spiritual *and* material, transcendence *and* immanence are composed in art. You need both to make a chef d'oeuvre. Art is about material things, the quality of gesture, the matter you use, *and* it is about meaning, *ideas*, differences that make a difference (Bateson 1979), which are incorporated into the work. It also needs imagination, energy, passion; and an observer, who enters a relationship with it, through the body. We observe with the whole body, not only with our eyes. We need to

enlarge our grasp of knowledge, to overcome the idea of a final, finished perspective, above and beyond all others.

In a sense, we *are* our perspective (in Bateson's terms: our own metaphor, 1977): some people see objects as mere material things. They use perception to capture the inherent qualities of the object. They measure, compare, evaluate. Others are enchanted by objects because they experience them as alive and do so even more when ceasing to separate them from the process of observation. We need a kind of dialogue between object, process and different observers. Objects depend on our sight as well as our in-sight. If we create a dialogue with an object—'If you come with generosity and the desire to understand the other', says Linden in the metalogue—a stronger even transcendental spirit can emerge. Spirit does not exist in the world of Pleroma. It exists in the world of Creatures, where things are moved and become accessible beyond their obvious materiality, and are pregnant with many potential, even conflicting meanings, rather than a singular perspective.

4

Critical Perspectives on Transformation

We are left, in the last chapter, with a dilemma: a disorientation, perhaps, on our pilgrimage: around Bateson's deutero-learning and the extent to which, according to Bauman, this fails to provide sufficiently secure anchorage for managing liquid modernity. Zygmunt Bauman portrays a world in which we struggle for a robust subjectivity, in good enough relationships. How much then might Jack Mezirow's ideas on criticality (Mezirow 2000) or those of the Frankfurt School of critical sociology, provide essential resources to face, manage and even transform our condition within a liquid modern landscape? We explore perspectives within 'critical theory' that could illuminate transformations of self and struggles for wider social change. We then move to the recursive idea of criticising 'criticality' itself, since it may have its own blind spots. If criticality is vital to challenging diverse oppressions, and in the practice of education, it may be insufficient for profounder forms of learning. We introduce the idea of self/other recognition in the work of critical theorist Axel Honneth, as one potential solution. But also psychoanalysis, as a prelude to the next chapter, with its insights into the difficulties of thinking. Key critical theorists draw in fact on psychoanalysis in developing and nuancing their perspectives.

There is an established relationship, in the literature, between perspective transformation and critical thinking: it is axiomatic for educated, sceptical Western citizens, including academics, to be critical of notions of truth, reality, and consciousness. Higher education is not simply a temple to intellectuality—pushing us towards clarifying basic assumptions—but also is suspicious of anything common sensical, naïve or beyond definition. Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud were the 'masters of suspicion' (Ricoeur 1970), the 'grand destroyers' of certainties. They taught, in different ways, that the 'real intellectual' should distrust consciousness and the simple appearance of things. We return to Plato's myth of the cave, to Descartes, and the dream of Enlightenment. But also to the idea that consciousness—the 'cogito'—and rationality, are the grounds in which we must anchor our struggles for meaning and agentic selves. So, we are educated into truth seeking while challenging truth claims. Our energies are directed towards constant hermeneutic effort, entailing deep analysis of texts, expressions, and phenomena of all kinds. But we wonder where all the effort takes us in terms of human flourishing. Therefore, we interrogate the roots, lights and shadows of critical thinking: its blessings, conceits and shortcomings when thinking about lifelong learning and adult education.

Jack Mezirow distinguishes between a 'subjective reframing'—as in psychotherapy, so he maintains—which commonly involves 'an intensive and difficult emotional struggle as old perspectives become challenged and transformed', and what he calls a 'mindful transformative learning experience' (Mezirow 2000, p. 23). Here the learner makes an informed and reflective decision on an 'infinitely wider range of concepts' and their cognitive, affective and conative dimensions. Psychotherapy involves, as he sees it, a relatively narrower focus on interpersonal relationships in contrast to adult education. The latter addresses 'something bigger', such as cultural orientations in institutions, customs, occupations, and ideologies, and changes in frames of reference in relation to these (Mezirow 2000, p. 24). The distinction troubles us, especially Linden, when we examine transformation through an auto/biographical lens. We use a case study from Linden's auto/biographical narrative research into the experiences of non-traditional learners in universities (Finnegan et al. 2014), to explore how one

person, an asylum seeker, finds his way towards some kind of educational and personal transformation. Criticality has a place, but alongside profoundly relational and loving processes.

Psychoanalysing Critical Theory?

Theodore Adorno, the critical theorist, referred to a 'pre-intellectual' dimension of our humanity, which shapes what and how we think and attempt to philosophise the world (Honneth 2009, p. 81). We can try to make the world rational but there is a problem with the hegemony of reason and rationality in struggles to transform. We may labour, for instance, under the mantle of a deeply entrenched defensiveness, driven by largely unconscious anxiety. We can assume that we fully know the object of our gaze, and desire, and, in effect, don a kind of omniscience. But this may be an illusion and a defence against intellectual and critical inadequacies (Bainbridge and West 2012). Many in the Frankfurt School were confident in their predictions that the proletarian revolution was an inevitable outcome of historical materialism. But critical theory fell short in its predictive power, leading Adorno to argue that we must interrogate the pre-intellectual roots of omniscient fantasy: including the idea that history can be fully known and its processes reduced to predictive theory. Critical theory, in short, required psychoanalysing.

It is worth repeating that people in the academy can be resistant to engaging with the messy world of subjectivity, an aspect of the Enlightenment inheritance. The point of science is to marginalise our inner worlds, even transcend them, via the power of reason and the rigour of the empirical method. Among critical academics and educators of a more sociological bent there can be suspicion towards psychologising experience at all while emphasis is given to cultural and social analysis in challenging oppression (Bainbridge and West 2012; West 1996). Linden, however, insists that psychoanalysis, broadly defined, can be integrated with critical theory, bringing the promise of more nuanced understanding of struggles to transform, grounded in life stories with all their psychic, interpersonal as well as cultural fragments. Laura was once suspicious of psychoanalysis, as a 'talking cure', too concerned to

generate interpretation flying over the heads of 'unknowing' patients. Here again, disembodied theory may inhibit feeling, thinking, and questioning; an omnipotent, hegemonic rational conceit. This is where perception and feelings could rescue us from an excess of criticality. Critical theory, in recent iterations, takes the original wholeness of our humanity seriously and suggests that part of its work must encompass the intimate and interpersonal. To realise, in effect, that we are rooted in rupture from the womb, and from significant (m)others: and dependent absolutely on the other for survival. This can freeze our efforts to engage with the world, for fear of abandonment. Any project of reflexivity or challenge to oppression might be profoundly emotional, embodied and relational in such terms.

We are of course asking how much critical processes are simply cognitive acts? And might common understandings of 'criticality' marginalise emotions, perceptions, the body, psyche, the feminine, the indigenous, and even the magical? Do not trust what you feel, what you see, what your body tells you, what your ancestors taught: criticality may claim to transcend all this. Silence those other voices and feelings, if you seek a critical appraisal of truth, and to achieve the transformation it brings. We are educated, as academics, to distrust other identities and potential ways of seeing.

Many authors, such as Habermas, Mezirow, Cixous, Britzman, Spielrein, Sayers, Luxembourg, Chodorow, Angela Davis, Honneth, Freud, Foucault, Adorno, Bourdieu, Marcuse, Benjamin or bell hooks have made a powerful critical impact on education and social research. They ask us to go beyond givens, or established perspectives, transcending the taken for granted, the self-evident, the apparently transparent quality of life to consider what may be culturally prescribed structures of feeling, and ways of relating and seeing. The prescriptions and inhibition may penetrate to our core and frustrate our humanity. In this kind of view, powerful discourses become internalised; discourse, or forms of language and ways of seeing, are riddled with implicit, often uninterrogated assumptions which shape, even determine, who we are and imagine we might become. Discourses can be impregnated with the assumptions and oppressions of race, class, gender or sexuality, for instance; ones firmly keeping people like us in our place. These

structuring processes, including language, matter in what we can define, for now, at least, to be the critical business of transformation.

Critical theory offers ways to 'think outside the box', and to illuminate and challenge some fundamental constraints to our human potential; constraints acting on and in us, as well as constituting our lifeworld. Ironically, however, the twentieth century casts its dark shadow over our stubborn, enduring resistance to, even terror of, liberation, regardless of changes in the social order. And our enduring capacity for violence despite 'reason'; the history of socialist thought, for instance, has never fully resolved the degeneration of noble ideals—*egalité, liberté et fraternité*—into *The Terror*, and barbaric annihilation of anything that might be other or too close for comfort in the perpetual narcissism of small difference. There may be limits to critical thinking in accounting for barbarity and the degenerations and fractures of progressive movements. We might, in effect, require ways of seeing and being that can heal an excess of criticality, as well as ironically to make it possible. The capacity of the human mind to slice reality into pieces, and to proclaim the truth and nothing but the truth, must be counter-balanced by aesthetic, embodied, psychotherapeutic and spiritual sensibility.

The Frankfurt School

It would be useful to summarise the key ideas of specific thinkers in the Frankfurt School tradition, such as Theodor Adorno. He raised questions about the power of critical thinking to provide a stable base from which to interpret the world (Honneth 2009). Much of this work has to do with how people uncritically internalise ideologies inimical to their own and wider human flourishing. The point of critique is to enable people to become aware of how, for instance, capitalism shapes belief systems and assumptions—what we can call our ideology—then serving to bolster and rationalise economic and political power and inequalities. Ideology lives in us, even when it may work against us. 'Without this element of ideology critique, the process of clarifying and questioning assumptions is reflective but not necessarily critical' (Brookfield 2000,

p. 129). There is a crucial distinction between mere reflection, and the possibility of questioning ours and others' assumptions at more fundamental or ideological levels. However, we argue later in the book, that ideological critique is one important but insufficient path to transformative experience.

Theodor Adorno (Honneth 2013) raised many questions about how we come to know and cultivate the capacity to transform our lives. He asked if there are limitations to reason when seeking to understand and illuminate the prerequisites of human flourishing? What forms does transformation encompass, and what tools are required in projects to change society for the better? The project of critical theory was itself grounded in a critique of capitalism, which included how it contained the seeds of its own destruction. The transformed and transforming consciousness of the proletariat would rend the whole system, and ideological rationale, asunder. History moved in a progressive if often painful direction.

However, Adorno and, later, Axel Honneth, was troubled by the interpretive failure of 'left-Hegelianism'. Adorno, as mentioned, turned to psychoanalysis to understand why people might act against their best interests, as well as why they could resist new ways of knowing. Moreover, he questioned the idea of transcendental knowledge deriving from abstraction alone. To understand the object we scrutinise—self, the other or capitalism—we rely on bringing some higher degree of responsiveness to that object, and to cultivate a sense of differentiation as well as precision. In what he called 'negative dialectics', he became concerned about the deficiencies that could characterise detached conceptual understanding. He challenges the sovereignty of the subject in the process. S/he must become aware of itself as something mediated, constituted, at least in part, in language: subjectivity is always, as mentioned, rooted in the 'pre-intellectual'.

Bringing together Nietzsche and Freud, we can illuminate the presence of a pre-rational layer of feelings, fears, desire and longing; including a primitive longing to know absolutely. The workings of our intellectual achievements dwell in these deeper drives. But as soon as the subject is aware that s/he is in no position to rationally penetrate reality, we can become more open to other ways of knowing. To trust

our own experience as a potential source of transformation, for instance. It becomes important to engage with all the stirrings of the senses, and subjective experience becomes a central medium of knowing (Adorno 2000; Honneth 2009). This, as Honneth maintains, is a truly revolutionary ontological as well as epistemological step for the Frankfurt School project. Cultivating profounder subjective reflexivity—as in psychoanalysis—is essential to build more objective understanding of self and the world, in dialectic relationship.

Troubling Transformative Learning

It is helpful at this point to explain Jack Mezirow's understanding of the role of criticality in transformative learning; and writers like Stephen Brookfield who explicitly relate their perspectives to the critical interrogation of ideologies that imprison us in deeply personal and painful ways. We then use the auto/biographical case study of an asylum seeker to help us to interrogate such views. Jack Mezirow (2000) constantly emphasised the importance of being 'critical', and of critical reflection, in transformative learning. He wrote that 'adult learning emphasises contextual understanding, and *critical* (our emphasis) reflection on assumptions' (Mezirow 2000, p. 3). This properly adult capacity needed to be added to Jerome Bruner's list of 'four modes of making meaning', that is:

> (1) establishing, shaping and maintaining intersubjectivity; (2) relating events, utterances, and behavior to the action taken; (3) construing particulars in a normative context - deals with meaning relative to obligations, standards, conformities, and deviations; (4) making propositions - applying rules of the symbolic, syntactic, and conceptual systems used to achieve decontextualized meanings, including rules of inference and logic and such distinctions as whole-part, object-attribute, and identity-otherness. (Mezirow 2000, p. 4)

Mezirow suggested the list was incomplete and a fifth mode of meaning making needed to be added, about becoming *critically* aware of our tacit

or barely surfaced assumptions. These include what we expect of others, and what others expect of us, and the role of expectations in shaping interpretations. The idea of criticality, as a way to challenge and change our sense of who we are, becomes critical, as it were, to transformation.

Jack Mezirow also describes transformative learning as a theory in progress that must be grounded in dialogue with diverse scholars. It is no finished project. Brookfield (2000) and Brookfield and Holst (2011) argue that Mezirow's work provides a potentially rich hermeneutic for considering the 'transformation in the ways we think, the ways we act towards each other, the ways we organise society and politics, the ways we distribute the resources available to us, and the way we understand the purpose of life' (Brookfield and Holst 2011, p. 33). From the inception of debate on transformative learning, Brookfield (2000) was concerned that the emerging idea of transformative learning risked being evacuated of meaning or becoming overly reified through being detached from the real-life contexts in which transformative processes take place.

Mezirow never intended such detachment, Brookfield observes: development in adulthood is a process of constant meaning making with the potential for people to become subjectively richer and agentic through growing of awareness. But Western, patriarchal, rational thinking is 'double blind' (von Foerster 1973), since it does not grasp that our capacity for seeing is limited. We do not 'see' everything' and are not necessarily aware of this. Neuroscience suggests that consciousness comes after perception or emotion, and that higher cognitive functions follow primitive affective states; even decisions are taken before we can rationalise them (Panksepp and Biven 2012; Hunt 2013). Both the literature of transformative learning, as well as of science, can be psychologically light.

Disorientating dilemmas, then, can be read as unexpected, magical, even amazing moments in life when emotions and rationality are bridged, and we become aware of our stubbornness and myopic predictability. We should remember that the emotions of discontent, embarrassment, loss, sadness, rage, and shame are powerful and ubiquitous, as well as being relational and social. We may look to others, in adult education, for instance, who similarly struggle, and use our social

awareness, feelings and mutual understanding, over time, to integrate new thinking and awareness into a reordered life. This is what Laura terms a *satisfying theory* (of transformative learning), where perceptions, emotions, concepts, values, judgements, and decisions are not separate, but work together, largely unconsciously, to guide us, in the company of others, to create a more integrated understanding of learning. For Brookfield being 'critical' is a 'sacred' idea, rather than something to be thrown about with abandon. It has to do with analysing power and ideology and how these conspire to constrain us (Brookfield 2000, p. 126). And to challenge the big picture of how larger forces, like neo-liberalism, racism or a one-dimensional masculinity may colonise our internal worlds, shaping our intimate reactions. Power, ideology or toxicity serve the interests of others—the corporate world, the advertisers, the money lenders, the hedge fund managers, even religious organisations and certainly racist ones, constraining our humanity. The difficulty is that these forces can then evoke destructive responses. When we 'challenge' an idea too energetically, and use the language of war, we might lack pity and wisdom, and the capacity to appreciate a wider complexity in which we are implicated too. So, a 'sacred' dimension could involve bridging what is out there, supposedly separate, with what lies within.

But it is also helpful to note that the idea of disorientating dilemmas, far from being merely a psychological and individual phenomenon, can be applied to broad economic, social and cultural dynamics, like the 2008 financial crash (Brookfield and Holst 2011); or to the presupposition that capital can be endlessly and ignorantly expanded, without regulation. Dilemmas arrive too in the form of wars, mass migration, or wider political crisis. Our ways of thinking are a 'function' of the way societies work, and the cultures where we live, and, in a circular way, of the ideas we cultivate. Our positioning, in fact, contains and enacts a theory of the world, contributing to making the world as it is, through the relationships that we have.

Brookfield and Holst (2011) use Mezirow to develop a notion that we are products of our 'webs of affiliation', within shared lifeworlds. This notion is neither positive nor negative in itself: we need others, of course, and it is normal that our relationships constrain as well as potentially liberate. Education and learning are a mix of constraints and

possibilities; they shape and may free us, but only partially. The question then is how the dependency of being human creates injustice, subjugation, blindness, and prisons of the heart and mind? Cognition is culturally situated through our positionality, while our habits of mind are structured by class, race, gender, and their intersectionalities, in complex, non-linear ways; by the 'cultural streams' in which we swim, so to speak. These in turn create 'common sense' assumptions. 'It's common sense, isn't it, for people to want to live among their own; too many immigrants cause too much trouble'. But common sense can be shaken by economic and ecological crises, and older systems of thought—individually and collectively—no longer suffice (Brookfield and Holst 2011). Yet we may hang on to these, or prematurely rush to embrace new ones, in ways that indicate the anxieties underlying and inhibiting transformative processes.

We are witnessing many dilemmas around 'common sense', in many of our countries. People can feel wrenched apart by the conflict between welcoming the stranger—rooted in Judaeo-Christian values—and the impetus to build walls, literally and metaphorically, to keep the other out. In Italy, as we work on this chapter, the mayor of a frontier town has invented the 'crime of solidarity': citizens can be prosecuted if they take water or food to migrants, congregating at the border. However, radical shifts are possible when we work among refugees, and listen to their stories; if we understand the interconnectedness between people, regardless of background. The dilemma encompasses warring political and human instincts: a true dilemma, since solutions are not linear or simply rational. Transformations in our thinking and awareness of others can lead us into troubled spaces, to questioning at a collective as well as individual level. It is more common, however, for people to turn the other way, to avoid difficult thoughts and disturbance. Transformation is challenging and troubling work.

Writers like Brookfield bring a much-needed political edge to the debate about transformative learning. Interestingly, Brookfield was criticised by European colleagues for using the word 'critical' without proper reference to the Frankfurt School. We are part of the debate ourselves, as Europeans participating in conferences of the Transformative Learning community in the United States. There is also in Europe

(and elsewhere, in Latin America, for instance) a fear of American colonisation, and an urge to reframe and re-interpret Mezirow's perspectives through a distinctive European lens (Formenti and Dirkx 2014). However, what Brookfield has done (being European himself), through an engagement with critical theory, is to integrate aspects of this European tradition with Mezirow's work, in a way that builds bridges rather than closes down the conversation.

Axel Honneth's theory of recognition (1995, 2007, 2009) is another potential bridge between intersubjective, unconscious as well as social dynamics in the cultivation of critical perspectives. It includes unconscious and deeply embodied processes as well as an imaginative engagement with symbolic objects and significant others (West 2014). Honneth, like Adorno, focuses on what he perceives to be the historical limitations of the Frankfurt School and its predictive failure. He considers new ways to liberate our ideas around the normative basis for building learning communities and social cooperation (Honneth 2009). Mutual processes of recognition and interdisciplinarity are at the core of such bridging work. The following case study from Linden's research helps us to consider the complexity and multiplicity of the struggle for transformation.

Illuminating the 'Critical' in Transformative Learning: Mathew, a Case Study

RANLHE was a European Union financed study of 'non-traditional learners' in 7 European countries (Finnegan et al. 2014; West 2014; see also http://www.ranlhe.dsw.edu.pl). The research teams worked with samples of students and staff in different types of universities (mainly elite, or older, and reform or relatively new institutions) in each country. The term 'non-traditional' was used creatively, critically, developmentally and cautiously (to avoid simplistic labelling), encompassing students from backgrounds normally under-represented in universities. They included students from ethnic minorities, and or working-class backgrounds as well as students who were the first in their family to go

to university; or were disabled or from migrant communities. The study encompassed younger and older learners.

When we (there were two of us in the Canterbury research team) first met Mathew (as we agreed to call him), he told us about being a refugee and now a carer as well as student. He was in his mid-thirties and talked of a very poignant, tragic disorientation resulting from war in Africa and the murder of close relatives: his dilemma was to stay or flee the warzone. He fled, and came to the UK, entered a university, dropped out, and then entered a different institution. He was interviewed four times during three years of a first-degree programme in this second, very multi-cultural London university. We asked questions about what enabled him to keep on keeping on. We wanted to know what was meaningful to him, as the present and past and even the future met in his story telling. This is what auto/biographical narrative research entails (Merrill and West 2009).

He told us some of his life history and the difficulties he experienced as an asylum seeker: an outsider, unrecognised, wrenched from one difficult milieu into a problematic other. He was now living in a materially poor part of London where racism could be rife. He had struggles with academic work, in the elite university, primarily because of limited confidence with English (his fourth language).

So, he dropped out of the elite university, which represented, in Bourdieu's terms, an unfathomable habitus. Sometime later he took an Access to higher education course and made friends with an English couple teaching on the programme in a college of further education. They supported him—at a moment when he risked dropping out once more—because of problems in his asylum status application process. They noticed how he kept missing sessions and asked what was wrong. He found it difficult to say but confided in them. Everything had been made worse by political decisions to force asylum seekers to register at specified centres on a weekly basis, in response to a rising tide of racism in English society (West 2016).

Mathew, like many other students, inhabited a world where boundaries between full and part-time study, work and university, family and student life, were blurred:

> I do work…I used to work for agency but agencies' shifts are not constant, so I joined BUPA (a private health care company) as a healthcare assistant. The rate is £5.90 for an hour… my partner is a nurse works shifts… I would be looking after the kids I have four boys… I've given up sleep lost hours of sleep to attend to the family and then education sometimes. I go to bed by three o'clock I get up by four o'clock five o'clock… I get up… prepare whatever I've got to take into [my] school, eat and shower the boys and leave them to dress by themselves and then go pack their bags/lunch and leave home by 8 o'clock they're supposed to start classes by 8.30 I mean 8.45 I'm supposed to start by 9… I have to drive to drop them to a neighbour who is very close to the school and who can just walk… so it's very much more difficult than people might think.

The two lecturers in the college were highly 'significant others', as Mathew struggled with self-confidence: he forged a close relationship with them, first as a student trying to study using English, and then with his asylum application. The two lecturers mobilised others, including a solicitor, to launch a campaign on Mathew's behalf for citizenship. Five years later, he became a British citizen in a ceremony, and they were there as witnesses. '*They were like good parent figures*', he said, and he felt looked after and understood. He celebrated the ceremony itself, as a moment of transition, a benchmark of achievement and recognition in what could be a fragile world. He worked hard to find supportive others in his new university. Finding a good personal tutor, and other sympathetic staff and students, was central to his progress.

A public healthcare degree appealed because of the shortage of mental health workers in the National Health Service. In a third interview, some 9 months later, he looked back on earlier problems with language and writing:

> It is difficult because when we started in the first year they said to us OK this first year we give you the opportunity and accept your assignment as is… that has been changed because of the stage of second year so you're now needing proof reading and that makes it difficult for people like me considering my background which I'm always constantly worried about how to translate my thoughts my ideas from one language to another,

from Mende/Kissi/Creole languages, to African English, then to British English is something that makes it difficult for me…

Yet Mathew eventually saw his cultural diversity, and the recognition this brought, as a resource in composing a new identity. He came to recognise the value of his languages, viewing them as opportunities for better understanding of others' worlds:

> Well from my languages from the various languages that I've gone through if you look at health for instance you cannot purely have a disease by itself. In that way you look at the medical models instead of looking at the social… or psychosocial aspect of it for the patient…having got some ideas about the… psychosocial aspect of health, taking it back to my past cultures… without making the connection with the social aspect you cannot treat the patient… so I bring in this system where I realise or begin to understand how I can actually help the sick from different cultures.

He could take more of a critical as well as culturally nuanced stance. In some cultures, he said, mental illness was a spiritual problem, while in others it was transmitted inter-generationally. He was critical of the neglect of the socio-cultural, including poverty, in dominant approaches to health care and medicine. Over time, he became a student advocate and community activist. He served as a representative for overseas students in the university and was a member of important committees. He learned to argue his case with university authorities, finding greater self-respect, self-esteem too, in the process (and in telling stories about it). He critiqued the neglect of minority communities and their experiences of health provision; and the failure to locate health and dis-ease in a wider socio-political context.

Yet, Mathew's is no simple linear tale of transformation. He continued to struggle with written assignments and in both the second and third interviews, the research itself became, for a moment, an explicit counselling space, in which he thought about his options and looked to us for emotional guidance:

> I don't want it to be a sign of weakness if I ask somebody to help me [proof reading my essay], that might make me a weak person… but there are a lot of resources which they call academic skills… I did it once, I've never done it again… but I have to change that because if I want to succeed I have to do that because the system is set up for that.

During the interviews, our dialogue deepened; there were interviews over three years; every interview was transcribed and given back to him, so the conversation and relationships developed over time, including in email discussions. During the penultimate interview he asked what we thought of him and the boundaries between auto/biographical narrative interviewing and educational counselling, past and present, were blurred. His self-confidence was, once again, fragile. My colleague researcher, a woman from a non-European culture, encouraged him to seek more help with his academic writing. He really wanted to know what she thought and began to talk at length. Admitting vulnerability was a dangerous business, he said, for someone like him, and he really valued our meetings. He made a decision to try once more with a difficult assignment.

By the time of the fourth and final interview, he had organised a new pressure group for multi-cultural awareness in health care, building on his insights as a student advocate. Mathew became more of an agent in his life, challenging taken for granted assumptions, and exploiting aspects of his own biography and experience. More of a self, maybe, vulnerable as well as agentic, critical and empathic, playful as well as challenging. We have glimpses of what we can call the dynamics of self/other recognition in transformative learning, building on Honneth's ideas. At a most intimate level, new experiences of self were created in new relationships, when feeling seen and valued, including in the research; at the meso or institutional level, self-respect was forged in real relationships and interactions within the university, that helped him feel part of a community of rights and responsibilities; and at a more macro level, he felt valued as an effective political activist in the university and beyond.

Yet, to repeat, this is no simple, linear transformation. Mathew wrote to us several times afterwards asking for help with assignments

(which we gave). He constantly feared 'failure' in the rituals called academic writing. It remained hard to admit vulnerability and to ask for help. His material illustrates extreme disorientating dilemmas, and of the relationships and context that facilitated transformation. It included insights into finding a critical voice and new ways of seeing in a world of displacement, of a confusing university habitus but one in which some transformation of self was possible.

How Can We Read This Story, Critically?

The RANLHE study played with three different but overlapping 'theoretical sensitising frames' (Finnegan et al. 2014) when working with learner narratives like Mathew's. The frames enabled the research team to gain a subtler, more nuanced view, in their juxtaposition. The concepts were developed by different authors (Bourdieu, Winnicott, Honneth, as well as others) in different disciplinary and or professional contexts: sociology and psychology, research and therapy, education and psychoanalysis. It is in the bridging that the interpretation of Mathew's story comes alive, including using Honneth's theory of self/other recognition (2007, 2009).

Pierre Bourdieu offers a sociological reading of social reproduction when considering learner narratives and why particular students struggle at certain kinds of university (especially older and elite ones). His work includes the concept of habitus, which can be understood as a kind of embodied culture, in which ideas, diverse practices and ways of being are in play (Bourdieu 1992). Such cultures shape how people behave, speak, think and their wider perspectives as well as how they communicate one with another and even deport themselves, as in studies of doctors in a medical training habitus (Sinclair 1997). Bourdieu's notion of disposition complements the idea of habitus and focuses on how people internalise an idea of what is expected of them. They will be more or less confident, depending on for example, their class or ethnic background, with the rituals of communication and language, or with what is required of them in writing, presentations, and assessment; and in a range of professional practice-based settings.

Such expectations and ways of being in the world are often unconsciously internalised, in a previous education or social setting, while the habitus of a bourgeois and white cultural background can be close to the habitus of specific, 'elite' universities. People understand, intuitively, what is expected of them, and of what counts as academic writing or discussion; and of how to engage in the diverse rituals university life involves, including rites of passage or ways of managing anxiety, via drugs, drink and or sex among younger students. Mature working-class students, for instance, can struggle in particular universities, because their social and educational 'capital' feels somewhat removed from what is valued, understood or expressed in the new habitus. They can feel, in effect, in Bourdieu's adaptation of a famous phrase, like 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu 1992).

Chapman Hoult (2012), however, among others, observes that Bourdieu fails sufficiently to engage with how certain students, from a non-traditional habitus and with apparently limited educational and social capital, survive, and prosper and even transform themselves by seeing the world and its assumptions in more critical ways. These are 'les miraculés', as Bourdieu frames it, 'an uncharacteristically metaphysical turn', Chapman Hoult observes, 'for a materialist' like him (Chapman Hoult 2012, p. 9). How these people may prosper, or be transformed, even in a culturally exclusive habitus of an elite institution, is glossed over by Bourdieu. Of course, he was aware of the phenomenon and argued, structurally, that such learners serve to mask systemic inequalities, as institutions proclaim 'look, we are open to all the talents!'. But he fails to engage with subjective experience of objective possibilities (Chapman Hoult 2012) among les miraculés: with those learners who buck the trend and prosper as well as challenge. Their stories can tell us about different strategies to cope, and the losses they entail and, in some cases, profound (if unconscious) suffering. It may be that Bourdieu's view of capital is overly constrained by a deterministic perspective and a neglect of psychological, experiential, or imaginative capital (that can be built through learning). We need finer grained, psychosocial analysis of the forms that transform or inhibit the play of self.

We also used Winnicott (1971) to help us think about potentially transitional and transformative spaces. Winnicott placed the capacity

for play and creativity, for letting go of anxieties, within the context of good enough relationships, and the spaces these offer for self experiment. Writers like Shelly Sclater use Winnicott's concept of transitional space, when thinking of storytelling itself or being at university as a kind of transitional activity, a process of self negotiation, more or less productive of selfhood, depending on the recognition that is received (Sclater 2004).

But it was Honneth that provided core connections in the bridging process. His notion of self/other recognition is fundamental, he states, to human flourishing. The dynamics operate, as suggested, at three interconnected levels. At the most intimate of levels, in relationship, experiences of self can be deepened in new qualities of relationship, when we feel seen, valued and understood, as in an Access to higher education programme. Such relationships touch primitive or early parts of who we are, mirroring processes in earlier life. Love, of a good enough kind, can be seen as foundational; not perfect or suffocating love, but one that celebrates our existence and enables us to enter transitional space in truer and less defended ways and to transcend the anxieties involved.

Honneth takes us to the meso, group and institutional level. Mathew's self-respect was forged in the university, by being accepted in groups and in a community he valued, with rights and responsibilities. Rights to participate as an equal member, to be listened to respectfully. And responsibilities to take care of the group, to give ourselves to it in ways that enhance its functioning. Mathew felt increasingly recognised and valued as an effective advocate and political activist, who made a distinct contribution to the wider university and beyond. This is the territory of self-esteem, forged in relationship. These interrelating levels are about far more than rationality or even ideal speech communities, in Habermas' terms (although this is part of it). They encompass largely unconscious, intersubjective as well as culturally infused processes. We can think of university, and research, as spaces for self-negotiation, where struggles around separation, individuation and transformation take place. Doing auto/biographical research itself can be a rewarding and transforming experience. The stories people tell—including to

researchers—become vehicles for recognition, and for self-renegotiation in a kind of narrative experiment of selfhood, where we are recognised and legitimised in the eyes and responses of significant others. What is then crucial is that these processes of self-recognition—feeling seen, valued and understood—enable us to more fully recognise others, on which social solidarities depend (West 2016). This places responsibility on to researchers: when doing auto/biographical inquiry the potential importance of our relationships to the subjects of our enquiry cannot be avoided, underestimated, or denied. In fact, asking for help, in Mathew's case, is 'evidence' of transformation itself, and an act of communication that demands responsiveness. The auto/biographical researcher is thus implicated in transformative learning (Merrill and West 2009).

When Laura stumbled over the RANLHE project narratives, she realized how much resilience, effort, and false consciousness were needed for her, Laura, to survive in a university habitus. She realised, for the first time, clearly, a feeling of being homeless, having lost the language of family, friends and rituals, and not easily being able to acquire new ones. She remembered a moment, years before, when she was explaining that she was coming from the countryside to the city, and a professor laughed: 'yes you are from outside, you are an outer'. It was meant to be a joke, but it wounded.

Laura became aware, over time, of her own inner and outer struggles, and ways of coping, for many years, as a first-generation woman academic trying to become a professional researcher in the Italian university, where social and economic capital are essential for career progression, and many years of precarious even non-paid work are expected (it gets worse rather than better). Economic capital makes a real difference, notwithstanding cultural 'upgrading' or knowledge, or what we might now call 'competences'. You must be able to pay your way. Now Laura has made it, she is an insider, a full professor in the Italian system, but still struggles. Insiders can survive and even prosper in the institution partly because they learn how to play the game while remaining, as much as they can, to be faithful to themselves. New possibilities arrive with new disorientations.

Linden's story has parallels, but different disorientations. He struggled in the habitus of university, in the late 1960s, coming as he did from a working-class background. He donned, in Winincott's terms, a false self to survive, which included rejecting where he came from, even the way he talked (West 2016). He took on a kind of bourgeois mantle that was never fully authentic. Much later, in becoming a professor, and in the recognition given to his work, he began to feel more authentic. But this was also the result of many years of learning in psychoanalysis where he recovered ordinary, split off parts of himself. He began to re-embrace the culture from which he came (although that older industrial working-class culture has died, in a post-industrial world). He learned to be critical, including ideologically, in a liquid world, grounded in new relationships, with actual people—his wife, close friends, a new analyst, his colleagues and students, where powerful forms of mutual recognition were created. And in relation to the symbolic, imaginary and auto/biographical in writing and teaching, finding new theoretical and good objects to help on the way. Like Winnicott, Honneth, Edith Wharton, Jane Austen, and others. But as with Mathew and Laura, transformation was a provisional, deeply embodied, relational, largely unconscious and uneven process, never complete and often fragile.

Conclusions and Openings

We have moved some way from the idea of criticality as a transcendent intellectual progress towards transformation, one interrogating the grip of ideology within and without. In Mezirow's work the pain and suffering as well as emotional ambivalence of the project are acknowledged, but insufficiently engaged with. For him, criticality means conscious reflection on our mind sets that must be changed, voluntarily and radically. In his terms, this is what divides transformation from other significant learning. Brookfield acknowledges how personal crisis, even psychological breakdown may be necessary precursors of

transformation. But a rational criticality is only one ingredient and landmark in journeys of transformation. We have argued, in this chapter, that ideology, abstract thinking and omnipotent masculinity can colonise adult inner life and awareness of it, and consciously distancing ourselves from it, provides one potential key to transformation. But it is only one among many.

Winnicott, the psychoanalyst, and Honneth, the critical theorist (who drew greatly on Freud and Winnicott) take us into the complex territory between inner and outer worlds, self and other, the conscious and unconscious, thinking and the emotions, body and mind, in considering what transformation encompasses. Honneth (2009) reminds us that, as mammals, we are carried by the mother for much less time than other mammals. We are so dependent on the other for survival, and how we separate from the prime care giver, the (m) other, compared to other primates, matters greatly. Any hint of being abandoned by the love object becomes a source of acute anxiety. This dependence, and associated vulnerability, are, so to speak, hard wired into us. We depend completely on that other, and a good enough nurturing environment, for what Winnicott termed the truer self to find expression.

But transitional space can make us feel like babies and infants all over again, including in universities. We may desperately want to feel welcomed, valued and loved. For someone to come alongside and recognise us and our struggles, and emotionally encourage us to become more fully ourselves. We need significant others to welcome who we are in diverse groups, and good enough cultural spaces, to experience feelings of self-respect and self-esteem. Such relationships are important in a lifetime's struggle to learn, which includes embracing the diverse otherness within. But, there is more to such processes than the interdisciplinary of this present chapter. We still need other perspectives to illuminate the possibilities alongside the difficulties of transformation. It includes why, individually and collectively, we resist change and transformational possibility. We now engage more fully with psychoanalytic perspectives, as part of our pilgrimage.

Walking Out of a Doll's House? A Second Metalogue

Laura: Linden, some days ago you were talking of Nora, Ibsen's character.

Linden: Yes, from 'A Doll's House'. A very powerful play. Paul Kegan uses it to illuminate the concept of transformation, as we witness in the next chapter.

Laura: Nora became a symbol for all those women who end up disrupting given rules and roles, actually leaving the family space in order to find self-respect and build what someone like you might call a 'truer' or 'real' self. The play was very ahead of its time; it is no surprise that it raised harsh debates and contrasting interpretations from its first performance in 1879. As with all masterpieces, it disturbs and interrogates us.

Linden: Never had theatre dared to do so much in challenging fixed women's roles and gender stereotypes.

Laura: At the beginning of the play, Nora enacts the perfect bourgeois wife, but soon she realizes that she is trapped in a dilemma, due to her good heart and sensitivity—or naivety. So, she begins to act differently, enacting another, more disturbing, character. For instance, when she dances a Tarantella at a party: apparently, she is going along with her husband's wishes, but he is disturbed by the 'messiness' of her performance, and drags her back home, scolding her for being too sensual and wild. This, a good woman only shows in the bedroom, maybe not even there. Torvald is captured by the exotic side of this dance. In fact, he is excited. But, surprise! She refuses to go to his room. He doesn't understand. As many men who fail to grasp the deeper meaning of North African or Middle Eastern dances. Women's dances, in many cultures, are sacred. They come from old pagan rituals, celebrating women's strength, messiness, and power. They show a hidden, savage side to

us: witches, amazons, women who run with the wolves, are archetypes of freedom, of the freer expression of emotions, and the power to heal, care, give birth, and to invoke the divine. All of that was unthinkable in civilized Northern Europe, in Ibsen's time, and maybe even now. Aren't we all, in a way, like Nora? Struggling to express our true feelings? Displaying an adapted and adaptable persona in diverse contexts?

Linden: There is a wilder more untamed side maybe to every one of us. I have wanted to escape too, into the wilds of Canada, letting the tundra draw me in. John Buchan's novel *Sick Heart River*, touches on a similar theme. A need to escape entrapment, to find our own way beyond a crushing compulsion to abide by society's norms of success and respectability. I felt freer for a while when visiting a First Nation Community, in the 1990s (one of my doctoral students was studying Women's education programmes in a Cree community, and I wanted to understand the culture from the inside). I have also used the escape of theatre to explore difference within me: the more feminine side, maybe, but this has been a big internal struggle. Here I am struggling to express truer feelings in this moment, and as I think of rigidity. The rigidity of Torvald and the culture he embodies; the rigidities that Nora must escape from. The rigidities within me: I felt a need to hold things together as a child, because of a lack of containment of anxieties I guess. Maybe my mother was not there for me; no doubt there was a Nora part to my mother as she sought to escape a culture in which women's roles could be rigidly prescribed.

Laura: This story speaks differently to different people. It can be interpreted as a feminist story, teaching about power in societies and families where women have no rights to decide on the course of their life. I was struck by the nicknames her husband gives to her—little squirrel, skylark—and no-matter-what-happens she is always smiling, dancing and singing. Her life is strictly ruled by the outside, she cannot decide, or learn, but only adapt to others' expectations. Ibsen presents her, at the beginning, as frivolous, delicate, dependent, begging money from Torvald. She embodies the specimen of the well-adapted, compliant bourgeois wife and mother. It is only little by little that Ibsen reveals the shadows, the complexities of her life.

Linden: I see her as having internalized particular cultural norms but the shadow and desire must break through the carapace if she is to develop psychologically. I'm also reminded of Stefan Zweig's writing about haute bourgeois women and their sexuality in fin de siècle Vienna: that some

forms of female sexuality could only be expressed by 'ordinary' women, in the bordello, or even by servants, looking after their male employers and their needs; but the bourgeois woman had to keep up appearances at all costs. 'She' was an appendage to men, caring for them and the family, and even denying her own sexuality because it was considered unfeminine. Nora's story asks all of us—not least men—about the cultural construction of our masculinity and its frequently oppressive, repressive and static forms. Nora insists we all have work to do.

Laura: As a woman, born almost a century later, I still resonate with Nora. Maybe because I was my daddy's little girl too. In the final conversation with Torvald, she explains—anticipating psychoanalysis, emerging only a few years later—the connection between her early relationship with her father—The Man for a little girl, indeed!—and her marriage. The transfer from one doll's house to another. Daddy's sweethearts have a difficult choice to make, if they want to be free. I remember my own awakening, in adolescence, when I realized that dominant role models hindered my flourishing, my freedom. I didn't want to follow the path of some women in my family and acquaintances, astoundingly similar to Nora. People desperately using their niceness to obtain some power in relationships. Unfair and competitive with other women: not even friends and daughters were spared. I despised, at that time, those of my gender who used seduction, childishness, and condescension towards men, to gain their place in life. But lately I stopped blaming them and became more curious for the overall game. People get captured in relational games. Studying the meso-system, family relationships, organizations, helped me to see that a single individual cannot determine the game alone. All of us play games, hoping for a meaningful and good enough life. Do not judge others, Laura, but try to understand complexity.

Linden: And I guess thinking systemically also takes us directly to specific family structures and the nature of the game being played between men and women, fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, fathers and sons etc. Contemporary issues also burst into this space, for me: Harvey Weinstein, Donald Trump and others; women as trophies, or narcissistic objects for display and abuse. And perhaps, at the risk of drawing down much wrath, some women, as you suggest, might be complicit in this, in their interactions with men. Sons too need to learn different sets of possibilities: including non-hierarchal and collaborative ways of being with the other. We are touching huge socio-cultural,

political as well as personal issues here. Like you, I have been caught up at times in a game: treating women as trophies and being expected to do so. Of needing to perform to be a man. But other men are now opening opportunities for men to be different. Writers like Andrew Samuels are helpful in considering lone parent fathers for instance as at the cutting edge of living a different, more relationally attuned, integrated gender reality, in which the feminine has more space.

Laura: In the final conversation with her husband, Nora dreams of an almost impossible 'prodigy': something should happen, between them, that transforms living together into a *real* marriage. She imagines a true relationship, where 'serious words' about 'serious things' can be spoken. She has in mind a transformation, then, that is not only individual. It entails a different positioning for both of them, in relation to each other. A 'prodigy' where separation is a necessary step to open new possibilities. Nora goes away, she tells that she cannot—'as she is now'—be a wife and a mother. Not on the existing premises. So, she has to leave. I like so much that slamming door, in the end. I know how it feels. Maybe because I also had similar experiences in my life, if not in my marriage. I thought, in those moments, that slamming a door gives you great force. When a relationship is abusive, or diminishing, you have to stop it. But here again, things are much more complex.

Linden: Doors slamming can be frightening as well as liberating. My mother slammed doors a great deal. And being abandoned by a woman in one of my own later relationships was shattering even though her desire needed to find more liberated expression. It may have been a necessary experience for both of us, in my own case a prerequisite to challenging my narcissism. I still remember a door slammed in my face, when I was at university, and how painful and psychologically fracturing it was. Who was I, what was happening to me, as I fell apart? Slamming doors is a kind of metaphor of shaking us to our foundations. Teaching us, me, of work to be done. A lifetime's work, that is still going on. I also think of Medea and the feeling of male betrayal that goes with that. In my own case, leaving a wife and children, with a kind of metaphorical murder of them. I have slammed doors and done damage to others. Except, my relationship with my children became a priority and we are now close. I worry about Nora leaving the children but that might eventually have been a good thing too. Reparation is possible, especially if we are able to give more because of the psychological work we have done.

Laura: Yes, life is not linear. We can come back, and repair what was broken. Is Nora's story then an example of transformation? Nora lives a dilemma. There is a conflict, or even many different conflicts: of ideas, problems and possible solutions, identities, values. When she realises that forgery is illegal, and cannot be justified by a higher moral motivation, such as love towards her father and husband, things fall apart. If she acted in disguised, hidden ways, however, it was because she was taught—as a woman—to act like that. To conceal her real thoughts and feelings. Her actions. To make up a false more acceptable self.

Linden: Men create, or are created by and within false self structures too. To put on a show, to perform because this feels like the only way to gain attention. And some women are attracted to men like that, as you state, and I have experienced. I was once active in politics as a City Councillor and a Parliamentary Candidate. Power can be an aphrodisiac for some women.

Laura: Is it power, or a struggle to find someone who is able to take care of you? Because you were taught that you cannot survive alone, without a man who takes responsibility for you, protects you, feeds you, rewards you. It is easy to mistake this for love. We are getting to the 'real' here in both our lives. Ibsen found inspiration for this piece in a real story. A good friend of his had a very similar experience to Nora's. She even asked Ibsen's help, but he had not been able, or willing, to respond, so she acted illegally. But the story went in another way: the woman's husband, when he discovered her behaviour, divorced her and had her interned in an asylum.

Linden: Yes and psychoanalysis may at times have fulfilled a similar purpose, in its individualistic, acultural stance. But not entirely so, when analysis takes place in a good enough relationship, where the analyst is learning too.

Laura: It is also interesting that this is a piece of theatre: something that is created to be embodied and played out. Theatre and cinema have the power to impress our bodies, we feel compelled by the interactions that are displayed on stage. And Ibsen's drama had so many representations. I was not surprised when I read that German and British theatres only accepted amended versions, in the beginning, with another, more conformist ending, where Nora returned home. Bourgeois society could then feel reassured. But of course it was a far less aesthetically successful ending and Ibsen despised it as a kind of avoidance of the real. There are many perspectives to this story: a feminist, maybe dominant one, that is interesting but partial; a psychoanalytic and critical perspective,

a relational interpretation and an existential reading. As with all good pieces of art, there is no final, definitive interpretation. The main transformation is maybe ours, as readers and audience, feeling and thinking auto/biographically, as our lives and perspectives interact. It becomes more of a shared perspective, enriching the dialogue, maybe encouraging another step in our pilgrimage.

5

A Difficult Business

When introducing the idea of being 'critical', in the last chapter, we mentioned how psychoanalysis challenges conscious perspectives on transformation and emphasises the danger of reducing critical understanding to a primarily cognitive process. Unconscious perspectives might mock some of our transformative, overly rationalist pretensions. In this chapter we reflect on how psychoanalysis poses important questions about what it is to be critical, or 'fully aware', and why we might need a broader frame for conceptualising transformation. We noted in the last chapter how Jack Mezirow (2000) made a distinction between the interpersonal and emotional focus of psychotherapy and the 'infinitely wider range of concepts of adult learning' (p. 23), and their cognitive, affective and conative dimensions. But psychoanalysis lays claim to make cognitively conscious what exists at an unconscious level—including the terror of letting go of the imagination and mind to embrace new truths. At heart, the process is deeply imaginal, embodied, interpretative as well as mindful. Challengingly, psychoanalysis, not least in its Freudian manifestations, brings a pessimistic view of the human condition and is tentative about our capacity to transform or to learn from experience. Freud wrote of psychoanalysis's purpose as being

to translate hysterical human misery into common unhappiness (Breuer and Freud 1957). This sentiment appears quite different from the mood music of certain writing on transformative learning or the liberatory perspective at the heart of critical theory.

Psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy encompass the transformative role of unconscious processes, as well as struggles in ambivalent relationships with actual people and the symbolic objects of our learning. Psychoanalysis, in its various schools, can enrich as well as challenge our perspectives on what transformation entails, including its limitations. Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, was no doubt shaped by his biography and Jewish identity, like Bauman: pessimism was forged in the calamities and barbarities of the twentieth century. Freud became an exile from the city and country of his birth and close members of his family were dispatched to the death camps. In this, and the next chapter, there is a dialogue between us about Freud and also Jung, and their relative merits; and around the themes of optimism and pessimism, including how difficult it might be for humans to transform. We reconsider the place of rationality, the unconscious, the body and spirituality in learning and education as well as transformative processes.

Linden emphasises, at times, how we may never fully transcend our primitive selves, drives and anxieties, and how disorienting dilemmas activate older defence mechanisms, including omniscience or omnipotence. This framing is partly shaped by his work among professionals including family doctors (West 2001). 'I know everything there is to know, and I can cope, whatever disorientation comes my way': such attitudes are found in many people, fuelled by social dynamics that encourage us to dislike dependence, to avoid help, and more generally to strive for self-sufficiency. There were echoes of this in Mathew's narrative, in the last chapter. Our experiences as a woman and man, growing up in different cultures and families, with particular 'psychologies', shape our perspectives too. Laura tends to see the glass as half full, or she is alive to the 'positives' in difficult experience. What the unconscious 'does to us', can in fact be conceived in positive ways, instead of hindering us. In fact, the gift of psychoanalysis to humanity, for Laura, is the recognition of our multiple, pre-verbal, animal, unconscious parts, that cannot be controlled by the conscious ego or will.

So, thanks to psychoanalytical studies, we know that to transform involves coming to terms with inner complexity, and to learn how to dialogue with it. How to compose our multiple parts into more of a whole is, in other words, a key developmental task. From an educational perspective, this leads us to integrate into our theory of transformation a necessity for inner connectedness, dialogue, and awareness that the impetus to transform can be driven by unrecognized parts of who we are. Linden agrees while remaining sensitive to how much we resist knowing about ourselves and the world and are easily entrapped in defensiveness. He knows, because of his own emotional biography, while the socio-political context in which we find ourselves, of rising levels of racism, xenophobia, fear of the other and violence, smacks of defensiveness. Of the desire to build walls against, rather than bridges towards the other, within and without (West 2016).

We both agree that if we are moved by conscious purpose alone, or follow some external rule, there will be a reaction: the unconscious warns us about the dangers of losing our affiliations, our mystery, our deeper identity, and even weakening our normal defences. However, instead of seeing this as hindrance, as a problem, we can see it as a source of healing, enabling us not to change too quickly, or in anti-ecological, overly narcissistic ways. Terror lurks in feeling vulnerable or dependent on someone else, reaching back to earliest experience. We can cut ourselves off from such feelings and escape into a defensive shell of rationality, allowing our false selves to dominate while insisting all is well. This may continue across lives, accompanied by false or superficial narratives of self-transformation: 'I am a totally different person, now'. Rationality and reason themselves might mask an elemental, barbaric destructiveness of which we are all capable. This is the source of the pessimism in the Freudian perspective.

We both worry that accounts of transformative learning can seem distant from the suffering, struggles, doubts and even the pain of lives, and of the sheer struggle to learn and transform. They are auto/biographically 'light' and reductive of learner experience (see West 2014). The concern derives from auto/biographical research, over many years, which leads us to a more nuanced understanding of the actual experiences of people, and how lives are characterized by struggles to keep on

keeping on; rather than a Hollywood-type fantasy of linear transformation. We have questioned our own capacity to perceive, at deeper levels, and to develop new perspectives in such a light, or maybe in darkness. Not all the transformative learning literature, of course, is detached from darker phantasies, or the shadows and fears that accompany profounder change. Many authors, from different perspectives, plead for greater attention to be paid to the complexity of inner struggles, to the darkness or shadows of our lives, and to the messiness of who we are (Dirkx 1997; Kegan 2000).

Among them is Robert Kegan, a 'constructivist developmental psychologist', who posed the question of 'what "form" transforms?' (Kegan 2000). Kegan, like psychoanalysts, takes us into murky territory. He drew, among other things, on Henrik Ibsen's writing as well as specific adult learner biographies, to illuminate how transformation can involve a desperate wrenching of selves from the context of lives, from families, from accepted and acceptable ways of knowing, and wider cultural norms. This is far from a psychologically or emotionally straightforward process, rather a potential journey into dark nights of the soul.

Transformative learning, for Kegan, involves 'a shift away from being made up by the values and expectations of one's surround' (family, friends, community, culture) that are uncritically internalised, in socialisation processes. The shift encompasses developing more internal authority, a stronger self maybe, that exercises choices over values and expectations according to 'one's own self-authored belief system' (Kegan 2000, p. 59). This deeply intertwined internal emotional and conceptual struggle, for many women, for instance, is the product of 2000 years of patriarchy, vertical social organization, and the neglect of relationality. Kegan quotes at length from Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, and engages with Nora, as we have done in the second metalogue. We have noted the deep discontent she felt towards her husband and her rigidly prescribed role in a deeply conservative and patriarchal culture, which eventually drove her towards a life changing challenge to the authority of her husband and wider cultural assumptions.

As Nora says to her husband Torvald, towards the end of the play:

You have never loved me. You have only thought it pleasant to be in love with me. It is perfectly true, Torvald. When I was at home with papa, he told me his opinion about everything, and so I had the same opinions; and if I differed from him I concealed the fact, because he would not have liked it. He called me his doll-child, and he played with me just as I used to play with my dolls. And when I came to live with you—I mean that I was simply transferred from papa's hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your own taste, and so I got the same tastes as you or else I pretended to, I am really not quite sure which—I think sometimes the one and sometimes the other. When I look back on it, it seems to me as if I had been living here like a poor woman–just from hand to mouth. I have existed merely to perform tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life.

This charts a journey towards becoming more of a questioning, agentic, emotionally aware, critical and self-authored woman. And it poses questions for men about patriarchy and masculinity too. The metaphor of 'a doll's house' communicates a child's world, and fragility, illusion, subservience, persona, a false and even imprisoned self in which both men and women are implicated. Change involves far more than cognition or even perspective shift; rather a wrenching, no less, of a trapped and defended self and entry into new sets of potential relationships, involving both men and women, as well as the struggle to interpret what is happening and give it meaning (Kegan 2000). Psychoanalysis, especially, can help us illuminate why this is so hard, and even courageous, as well as a never complete project. It encompasses body, mind, conscious and unconscious process, false and truer selves in relationship; and, anticipating the next chapter, maybe soul too.

We may try and fail to break free, or it takes a long time and we try and fail many times, across a life. The pursuit of truth about ourselves, of why we act as we do, or the quest for greater contentment, may also entail some acceptance of our destiny and not to search for the 'why', all the time. We are not in control of everything that happens to us: in birth, death, loss, suffering and impotence. We might have to let go of conscious reasoning, and allow images, metaphors or even archetypes (in more Jungian terms) to find expression and guide us. Jung referred

to archetypes as symbols, images and patterns laid down in a kind of collective unconscious, but which can bring light in darkness. They are a sort of neurologically patterned, inherited wisdom that helps in our here and now struggles. We can realise, through dream work and engagement with our fantasies, our capacity for destructiveness and violence, which Freud emphasised. For both Freud and Jung, the journey of transformation and understanding was hard won, riddled with illusions, trials, blind alleys as well as courage.

There may also be regression from seeking truth about ourselves, and retreat into older patterns of behaviour. Maybe, in Nora's case, we could imagine her falling back into a belief in father figures, even God him or herself, as the royal road to happiness. Ibsen does not tell us of Nora's destiny. For Freud, a father figure for many, God was an illusion, a defence against our frailties, an escape back to the oceanic bliss of the womb. Freud (1913) also used the work of Charles Darwin to speculate that in primitive societies the social unit was a primal horde, a group of people arranged around a single dominant male, who has total authority over the group and holds claim over the females. Freud suggested that our ancestors could have killed the 'alpha' male out of jealousy as the male maintained sexual rights over the women. Murder will have caused guilt, as the dominant male would have been respected and feared. The guilt will pass through history into people's unconscious minds (he suggests this might have been genetically inherited). The males focus their guilt onto a totem animal (animism, the belief that spirits exist in rocks, trees and animals), who they pray and make sacrifice to, in order to atone for the crime. Over time, this totem of the murdered leader might become more important, taking on the form of an early God. We can perceive Freud playing here with an explanatory metaphor: of the basis of male competitiveness and its destructive potential, rather than actual events.

God might offer comfort, but this is an escape from truth or Freud's reality principle. Freud more generally sought to ground understanding in the power of reason and empiricism—seeking to see things as they were rather than shaped by inherited myths, or personal and collective delusions. However, science could have served as a God-like delusion for him, almost despite his romantic self. The project of psychoanalysis

might well have constructed its own empirical deception about the nature of its science, presuming this to be free from cultural norms or the power of ancient mythology and stories. Freud always emphasised the power of reason in transformation: he presented himself as the rationalist, with a zeal for empiricism. But he loved literature and myth and was a Romantic, widely read in a number of languages, including English and French. Freud struggled with the territory of the a priori and the divine pretentions of science across his life. It was as if he had to force himself to utilise the power of myth to illuminate the psychic life of his patients (Symington 1986; Allison 2017).

Whatever, we have to abandon our capacity for magical as well as omnipotent thinking and become more aware of how the desire for mastery and total truth constrains our curiosity and capacity to feel surprised. We may have to accept fragility, dependence and faults, however hard this can be. The road of transformative learning could lead towards humility, towards Keats' negative capability, the capacity to live in not knowing or uncertainty without grabbing at facts or magic.

Freud emphasised the contingency of life and that there is a destiny or even a tragic element in our lives. Some events lie outside our conscious control, like death or various forms of loss. The Greeks understood the concept of destiny rather well and their myths have to do with the frequent powerlessness of humans in the face of the unpredictability and power of various Gods; and of natural events, tragedies, failed relationships, falling out of love, as well as misunderstanding, war, conflict, violence, the sadism of the powerful, or the ill luck of blind chance. Maybe the Freudian perspective is too far towards a negative or pessimistic end of a spectrum in comparison to Jung. Laura, especially, believes so.

Psychoanalysis however is not uniform: it has a history and has witnessed fierce debates and schism within its own community. Born as a healing method, it soon became a paradigm, a scientific perspective, designed to encompass and theorise the dynamic unconscious. We can think of it as sustained engagement with aspects of who we are that we don't want to know, including our potential for violence, competitiveness, envy or greed; and it can be a long, tortuous, if ultimately rewarding journey to understand this. The struggle for the 'truth' of our lives is

difficult work, as well as a source of potential transformative joy in new insight. But, to repeat, Freud taught of our resistance to knowing, of not wanting to know at all, and our tenacity for holding on to what is self-denying or demeaning in ourselves.

A Biographical Pessimism?

Freud was deeply preoccupied with the role of sexuality as well as destructiveness in human experience. His concern was the product of the history and culture of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Vienna. The celebrated Jewish writer Stefan Zweig, born roughly at the same time in Vienna, and someone he knew well, recalls the sexually repressed, bourgeois and patriarchal world in which both he and Freud grew up (Zweig died in 1942, in a suicide pact with his wife in the face of the appalling suffering of Jewish peoples in Europe). He wrote:

> We who have known since Freud that those who suppress natural instincts from the conscious mind are not eradicating them but only, and dangerously, shifting them into the unconscious… But the entire nineteenth century suffered from the delusion that all conflicts could be resolved by reason, and the more you hid your natural instincts the more you tempered your anarchic forces, …young people would forget it… The churches, schools, salons, books and newspapers, fashion and custom …avoided any mention of the matter… Science capitulated on the pretext that it was beneath its dignity to study such indecent subjects. (Zweig 1942/2011, p. 91)

Freud challenged the repression of sexuality in life and science in fin de siècle Vienna. He was interested, particularly, in the role of repression in women's lives, partly because women formed a majority of his patients. Women's expressions of desire, at least among the bourgeoisie, as with Nora, were considered socially unacceptable and even abnormal. An expressive sexuality belonged more to the cultural margins of the bordello. Making conscious what was unconscious, like desire, however, was the *sine qua non* of Freud's psychoanalytic project. The project

was to do with truth seeking and designed to release energies tied up in repressing 'natural instincts'. He was attacked and ridiculed for his project, caricatured, at times, as a demonic Jewish doctor.

We get clear glimpses in Zweig's writing of the Freud who understood life's precariousness, as a Jew in a Catholic, Christian culture. He faced the culture head on in regarding religion as escapism. He thought it a primitive child-like refusal of difficult knowledge, and even a defence against an Oedipal wish to murder one's father and marry one's mother (Sayers 2003). Freud, as the product of a past Viennese culture, would probably have considered much of the contemporary transformative education literature to be superficial, avoidant and over optimistic. He was in many respects the good bourgeois, a product of a deeply conservative society.

Zweig was a great admirer of Freud. He too experienced the calamity of the First Wold War, and the fact of Austria becoming a much-diminished country; by the end of the 1930s it ceased to exist at all, following the Anschluss with Hitler's Germany. Zweig fled Austria as the Second World War approached, and the two of them met again, several times, in London, towards the end of Freud's life. They mused on the plight of Jewish peoples and the barbarism that was being unleashed across Europe. Zweig (1942/2011) notes how Freud was unafraid to challenge taboos, of whatever kind; and how a supposed liberal world was threatened by his ideas. His theories of depth psychology were challenging to many of the progressive assumptions of the Enlightenment intellect, and to the idea that instinctive drives could be repressed or ignored in the triumphant, transformational march of reason. Freud struggled to be fully accepted in Vienna, Zweig notes; and now the two of them, in a North London garden, contemplated the terrible outbreak of bestiality and violence, once more, across a continent.

The Structural Model

We believe that Freud's structural model of the psyche—id, ego and superego—is a useful metaphor to consider aspects of our formation, and transformation, maybe, that are played out in early as well as later

life. We might consider the 'id' as the greedy, demanding, infantile part of ourselves, wanting things immediately. Pleasure now, regardless of the consequences. There is no time to spare: now, now, now we scream, whether for food or an answer to the teacher's questions. Students in universities can resist the idea of learning taking time, that it is a struggle, and can bring us up against a constraining, difficult realities. Learning of a transformative kind requires engaging with infantile tantrums. We may want to be transformed in the first few weeks of a new programme: 'I never thought it was going to be this hard'. The strengthening of the ego, in relationship, with teachers or analysts, becomes the means to as well as a consequence of engaging with the reality principle: of seeing experience as it is rather than what we want it to be. We can think of the super-ego as a disciplined frame of meaning and a structure of knowledge to be internalized, a kind of 'law' or truth, that opposes our greediness. It makes the social real and obliges us to stay within parameters. In most societies, the super-ego can represent the idea that learning takes time, demands discipline, and is not like fast carbohydrate food, offering immediate stimulus. Such an idea of course collides with the contemporary gospel of consumerism and junk food. It echoes the metaphor of Bauman's gourmet dishes, that require knowledge, time and skill to prepare, and a subtle cultivated taste to savour and enjoy.

So how then do we compose the ego or nurture the potentially mature aspect of ourselves? The distinction between learning from, rather than learning about experience is useful. 'Learning from' has to do with a deeper, more engaged and integrated level of experience, a fulsome emotional, sensorial, cognitive, spiritual, and heart-felt encounter with an object of knowledge, like a piece of writing, or art, a metaphor or an idea. Or engaging with ourselves and who we are and might be in psychoanalysis and in auto/biographical writing, in poetry or even in research. Such realisation and experience help build ego strength, as well as friendlier internal relationships between id and superego, and deeper forms of satisfaction in feeling fed and nourished by the good object. We can call this a deeply connected, integrated and embodied locus of transformation.

But psychoanalysis, à la Freud, regards thinking and education in such terms to be a difficult business; he called education an impossible

profession, like psychoanalysis. We are asked to suspend what we know, in the promise, without certainty, that we will find something better; we are required to trust and believe others but have no real idea where the trust will take us. We are asked to accept the rhetoric of transformation when we begin an educational or even therapeutic programme but have little idea of what transformation looks or feels like or whether it is achievable. Deborah Britzman (2003) draws greatly on Freud in writing about education and considers love and education to be intimates. Their exchanges and offerings are precarious. They encourage dependency and helplessness. They incite pleasure but also seek to move pleasure or instant gratification closer to reality. Both involve problems of self/other dynamics where we can feel lost, out of control, ecstatic, desperate, confused, child-like, hopeful and hopeless at the one and the same time.

Britzman describes how we encounter some of the anxieties surrounding education (and we can add transformative learning) in contemporary novels and films as well as in our dreams, where the university represents a site of betrayal, of misunderstanding, despair and breakdown, as well as breakthrough. Where our dreams are dashed, and our heroes have feet of clay; rather like Rita in Willy Russell's play and film *Educating Rita.* Rita is a working-class woman from Liverpool—a hairdresser—who desires to better herself by studying literature at university. Her Open University professor, Frank Bryant, however, has long since embraced alcohol, and develops misgivings about Rita's ability to adapt to a university habitus, with what he perceives its deadening and conformist ethos. Bryant is a jaded character, who describes his academic ability as 'appalling but good enough for his appalling students'. His passion for literature is reignited by Rita, whose technical ability for the subject is limited by her lack of education but whose enthusiasm Frank finds refreshing.

Books are burned, projects are abandoned, even if there is a kind of eventual resolution in greater self-awareness and finding new direction. Universities can be locations for intense disappointment and conceit. They harbour the pompous and lost alongside the privileges of class and wealth, and a kind of distant intellectualising that can shred our humanity and deeply disenchant. Mathew, in the last chapter,

eventually found his way, in relationship, to a kind of transformation, but it was hard won struggle.

A Bad Press

Psychoanalysis has had a bad press in the academy and among many educators. It is marginalised in writing about education, lifelong and adult learning, despite its influence in earlier parts of the last century (Bainbridge and West 2012). There is concern that psychoanalysis lacks rigorous concepts or a convincing empiricism, and, for some, it is socially conservative in its implications: preoccupied, in effect, individualistically, with getting people to adjust to a status quo rather than challenge it (Tennant 1997). Mark Tennant cites Erik Erikson as suggesting that mental health emanates from successful adjustment to the demands of society, without reference to the fact that some forms of social organisation are unhealthy and oppressive. Proposing an individual path of healing as a solution to problems, in an oppressive culture, is disrespectful of complexity. However, as noted above, critical theorists like Honneth and Adorno take psychoanalysis seriously, both as an individual and collective endeavour. For Honneth (2009), recollective work helps us understand how our desire and will formation are frustrated, while Adorno (1973) explored the defensive, unconscious and pre-intellectual dynamics which can impregnate our engagement with our objects of enquiry. Conceptual knowledge, he insisted, is insufficient when building insight into what we seek to know: we have also to interrogate our own desires and illusions.

Literature

At core, psychoanalysis is about experiences of making meaning, in relationship, and the desire to understand why we are driven to act, or act out, in destructive ways. But describing its theoretical and interpretative repertoire in overly abstract terms is akin to confusing a manual of sexual technique with being in love. As in love, we need

the language of poetry or the poetic imagination, so Laura argues, to grasp the struggles inherent in psychoanalysis, education, or love for that matter. Literature, rather more than science, can teach about such matters. Freud reluctantly wrote that 'a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers, enables me, with the use of a few psychological formulas, to obtain at least some kind of insight into the course of that affliction' (Freud 1893b, pp. 160–161). Neville Symington (1986) describes Freud's extensive knowledge of English, German and French literary traditions, as well as of classical authors, and how they played a central part in his interpretative repertoire, despite his efforts to be the good objective empirical scientist (Allison 2017). Oedipus Rex and the myth of Narcissus turned out to be powerful sources of inspiration and insight.

Linden has drawn on literature, like Malcolm Bradbury's campus novel *The History Man,* in his writing on adult education (West 2016). At the centre of the novel is a character called Howard Kirk, who is the ultimate of liberated intellectuals; and a narcissist, who regards others as fodder for his fantasies of absolute knowledge and desire for intellectual and emotional power. He is a kind of would-be leader of an academic horde. His hard and cold Marxism (not all Marxism is like his) leads him to believe he knows most of what there is to know, including history's destiny. In the name of liberated enquiry, he works his way through countless sexual affairs as part of a research project on intimate human encounters. Students are brought within his scientific compass, and many are damaged on the way, including his wife. Linden was never the 'success' Kirk was, either in love or the academy, but became aware, through years of psychoanalysis, of how much he was driven by narcissism, by a felt absence, and a pressure to be the best as well as to be accepted in the academy.

He was seduced, for instance, by the power of academic fashion, to interpret the historical evidence on workers' education, in the early part of the twentieth century, through a quasi-Marxist lens (although he never really bought into Marxism). Worker's education, of a specific kind—an alliance between progressive elements in

universities and workers organisations—represented, in the view of Marxist historians and critical sociologists, a university-led incorporation of working class intellectuals into tranquil national cultural consensus and away from revolutionary zeal. Linden dismissed what previous generations had achieved, which can also be read as a rejection of his father, and of a working-class identity, alongside struggles for acceptance in the scary cultural habitus of a 1960s university. There was a strong Oedipal twist in siding with his mother in denigrating his father; in donning the mantle of the shining knight, dressed in university armour, to gain approval.

Laura recognizes in Kirk people she has met in academic life. It took her time to understand the play of her own relational script—what psychoanalysts call transference—with particular characters and to learn to cultivate a distance, without harming herself. For a woman, meeting men like Kirk is threatening, since his way of communicating is based on double binds, seduction, and blurring boundaries. The university, like education and love, is a difficult business, occasionally transformative but also full of wretchedness. We might grow psychologically after an encounter with Howard Kirk or be damaged for life. Britzman (2003) suggests that a lot of writing on education is emotionally and psychologically sanitised: bad teachers are few, miserable locations rare and demeaning evaluative procedures limited. Reality is not like that, and auto/biographical research provides space to tell stories about abusive teachers, inappropriate educational practices and destructive evaluation. When we open our lives to others, Britzman insists, we face the deep paradox of promise and vulnerability. No wonder we sometimes retreat. We enter a world of others, and are made by them, but shape them in turn, including our parents and the cultures we inhabit. But power tends to lie, at times, with the other, not ourselves, in earlier and subsequent experience. This is a basic question of our book: how, from such confused, inarticulate, dependent beginnings, as human beings, do we or can we learn to become more humane (Britzman 2003, p. 20). It must be a central preoccupation of transformative learning.

A Broad Church: Object Relations and Intimate Perspectives on Transformation

Psychoanalysis is now a very broad church, with many schisms and diverse ways of knowing. There are more optimistic framings of the psychoanalytic project, even if Freud offers important cautionary tales. The British school of psychoanalytic object relations—in which tradition Linden trained as a psychoanalytic therapist—conceives psychological transformation, or at least change, as rooted in the quality of our relationships with actual people and in the symbolic order. Its focus is on the quality of space between people, and the extent to which this encourages playfulness, in the language of Donald Winnicott (1971), or an experiment in self-negotiation. Analysis and education offer opportunities for transitional and transformational experience, in the attentiveness and attunement of the other: transformation is possible when people feel seen and understood, viscerally, at their core, so that they too might see and understand. The complexities of transformative possibility are illuminated by psychoanalytic observational studies as well as in auto/biographical narrative research. Such studies focus on early childhood and adult life, drawing on object relations theory. Arguably, they help us move towards a more sophisticated, nuanced and even holistic understanding of what transformation involves.

In object relations, emotions and relationships are the prime drivers for learning: '…it is emotional interpersonal understanding that provides the basis for meaning and is the precursor of language' (Diamond and Marrone 2003, p. 6). The interpersonal lies at the heart of object relations theory—Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, Wilfred Bion and others—as against classical drive theories. The latter are more focused on intrapsychic processes, dominated by conflicts between drives. Object relations theorists like Winnicott give greater emphasis to the intersubjective or relational context: how we internalise intersubjective 'objects'—most famously the breast. Objects can be good or bad, a source of nourishment or its converse. Melanie Klein argued, through clinical observation, that selves are forged out of the way we internalise objects—whole people or parts—and absorb these as sets of fantasised

internal relationships that become the building blocks of personality (Klein 1998; Frosh 1991).

Janet Sayers (2000) suggests that the new emphasis above turned psychoanalysis 'inside out'. Self and subjectivity are dynamic, never complete products of our relationships with actual people and diverse objects, including the symbolic and metaphoric. The self, in earliest experience, is totally dependent on the other, and her responses are crucial to healthy self-development. But anxiety can constrain our potential, forged in our vulnerability and absolute reliance on others. Moreover, in all psychoanalytic schools of thought, some capacity for destructive, hateful and envious feelings remain. They are a product, in the object relations version, of the baby's interaction with the prime caregiver, including when hungry (the baby has no concept of time) or otherwise in need. In good enough relationships, the other's response is critical in processing bad feelings: s/he can work to contain and feedback hateful and destructive emotions, in loving ways—to enable the baby or infant to be thought-full. This amounts to a kind of transformative interaction, but actual relationships can fall short of being 'good enough', in Winnicott's compelling phrase.

Talk, sounds and rhythmic movements however can combine to give reassurance, and the sense that things are fundamentally well. It amounts to a prototypical conversation about the potential goodness of experience. The baby, in turn, internalises the good object parent, creating a sense of basic well-being in the world, of thoughtfulness as well as a desire to engage. The baby or infant learns the power and play of language and can experience self and agency in the response of the other, through language, in part. We come to realise that the arousal of needs is pleasurable rather than to be dreaded, offering a building block for relatively open forms of engagement in our lives. But none of these intersubjective dynamics is perfect and anxiety always lurks, just beneath the surface. Klein developed the idea of splitting as a defence against anxiety: in being dependent and needy, for instance, we may split off 'bad' and needy parts of ourselves (when hungry) from the good (when fed), for fear that the other might reject us or otherwise be unavailable (Klein 1988; Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Frosh 1991).

Such splitting applies in adult life too, in many settings: whenever we feel vulnerable, dependent or inadequate, we may split off and project onto others or whole groups 'bad' or 'good' aspects of ourselves. We may construct an idealised image of self as one who copes, like particular medical doctors in Linden' study of family practitioners (see Chapter 6). They might be seduced by phantasies of omniscience and omnipotence (West 2001). If, in earliest experience, anxiety is ever present, anxiety also lurks in transitions of many kinds. People may feel unable to cope with new ideas or change processes, as the past elides with the present, present with past, in what Melanie Klein termed 'memory in feeling': a deeply embodied and largely unconscious dynamic (Klein 1988).

Isca Salzberger-Wittenberg (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al. 1983) observes that, however mature or capable we may be, there can be a continuing dread of helplessness, of being overcome and found deficient. She describes meeting groups of experienced professionals beginning programmes at the Tavistock Clinic in London. She was aware of tensions in the room, during a first session. She encouraged everyone to comment on their feelings in that moment, and people talked of insecurity, anxiety and the fear of being found wanting. The trouble, she concludes, is that we often pay lip service to such feelings and ride roughshod over them in educational settings. It is threatening to our status as knowledgeable adults, and the more disorientated and terrified we feel, we are still supposed to know and cope (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al. 1983; West 2009). Anxiety may find virulent expression in the face of a new idea, or a different way of knowing, bringing fundamental challenges to our existing assumptions and sense of self, as among women learners in their first encounters with feminism (West 1996).

Donald Winnicott's (1971) ideas are especially helpful in thinking about the nuance of transformational experience, particularly his notions of *transitional space* and the idea of play. He was interested in the infant's struggle to separate from a prime caregiver and what makes this possible, in psychologically healthy ways. He defines transitional space as existing between people, where it is possible to experiment with who we are, even to fantasise, in a kind of process of self-negotiation. This is more likely if the space is encouraging and we can claim

some space for ourselves, in deeply embodied and emotional ways. Transitional space opens the possibility of separation from a prime caregiver, or from an established way of being, and taking tentative steps towards becoming someone different. Winnicott was to apply the idea to processes of separation and self-negotiation in adult life as well as childhood: to what enables people to move from dependency and defensiveness towards greater openness to experience and creative forms of endeavour (Winnicott 1971). Playfulness—the capacity to let go, to be creative, to be relatively emotionally and ideationally free, absorbed in the here and now of an activity, trustful, unconcerned about everyone else—is not only for children. It is necessary for adult health and well-being, and for significant learning. A transitional space enables playfulness among participants in many and varied forms, between a couple, at university, in a seminar, or in therapy. The unconscious makes no distinctions between contexts. Mezirow's distinction between education and therapy becomes problematic in such terms.

Significant others, and their responses, are important in re-evaluating self and possibility and in overcoming anxieties about whether the space is for us. A person might come to think and feel differently about themselves, about the nature of 'reality' and future possibilities because of the responses, over time, of significant others (like a teacher or other respected professional). If people feel seen, understood and legitimised in their endeavours—in struggles to create a new life or in composing a new self-narrative—a stronger sense of self and playfulness is experienced, viscerally (West 1996). Playfulness has to do with letting go, entering imaginal worlds, creating new ones, and the tactile, moulding of separate objects into whole worlds. Of course, play has its dark, perverted side: witness children in the school playground, or adults in the university seminar, but it can provide the means to experience more of a fulsome self and agency (Green 2005).

How is transitional space created? Linden recently examined a clinical doctorate thesis in child and adult psychotherapy at the Anna Freud Centre in London, under the auspices of University College, London (Ratke 2016). In her thesis, Adrianna Ratke used Winnicott to express the kind of good enough relational experience that toddlers or young

children need if they are to gain the capacity to receive those around them, and diverse objects. She quotes Winnicott directly:

> When I look,
> I am seen,
> So I exist,
> I can now afford to look and see. (Winnicott 1971, in Ratke 2016, p. 19)

This is Winnicott's poetic way of connotating movement from a potential to an actual authentic self, and Ratke chronicles these processes in one family. The mother is depressed and talks of feeling cut off from the infant. 'The baby', in the researcher's notes of the analytic encounter, 'crawls to the other end of the room. Mother tries to lure him back by 'clowning' with various objects on her head. Letting them drop down to the floor. 'Baby looks confused, even worried. Therapist and father look on for a little while. The therapist then says to the baby 'You are not so sure about that are you? (In reference to mother's 'clowning'). 'When mummy puts things on her head, is Mummy being funny? Or is Mummy being too different?' (Ratke 2016, p. 73).

The infant is talked to directly and empathically by the therapist, in this moment of uncertainty about his mother. Ratke proceeds to illustrate how the infant communicates feeling recognised: he pauses and engages with the therapist by pulling himself up to her and smiling. The mother however becomes anxious and takes the baby from the therapist. She then talks about how she constantly feels possessive, as her sister in law and her mother tell her. Over time however, she seems to relax and becomes better able to digest what is happening and its biographical roots. Ratke's conclusion is that the child was helped to make sense of his mother's emotional state of mind; while the mother was enabled, in a good enough space, to feel the quality and relevance of a rewarding interaction.

Then, there is a dialogue, encouraged by the therapist, in which everybody feels more understood. We can say that the child can live in the situation more fully, better able to play. Maybe learning for some future situation too. Ratke's writing focuses on the emergence of 'a less

defended self', and on processes of self-negotiation in a good enough space, where the mother becomes more engaging. As does the father, who joins in the conversations. Ratke writes of the therapist as 'third' in relation to the three dyadic pairs of mother–infant, father–infant, and mother–father, as well as a fourth in relation to the triad of mother–father–infant. Ratke concludes (Ratke 2016) that the dyads are able to function more effectively as a whole family, creating 'the sum out of seemingly separate parts' (p. 7). These observations might take us to the heart of a perspective transformation, located in experiencing selves finding hope, recognition, understanding, presence as well as new resources in the world. Selves better able to look at the world and to experience it as good, or at least good enough, and thus more capable of responding in spontaneous ways.

This case story evoked debate between us. It can be interesting to share it, since it illuminates differences between the psychoanalytic and the systemic perspective that can however be bridged. Laura reacted quite strongly at first to Ratke's description of the situation. She refused part of the story. Laura dislikes the idea of 'mind reading'—how can the observer—or therapist—possibly say what the mother or the baby really 'feels'? Mind reading, in Laura's experience, is one of the most violent manifestations of mystification (Laing 1976), one that paralyzes playfulness. So, she sees a paradoxical quality in this interaction, where a mother might be instructed how to feel. Laura also raises the problem of evidence in psychoanalytic settings, which is a source of constant debate between more empirical developmental psychologists and psychoanalysts. The growing influence of relationally focused analysis has led to an interest in more 'objective' observations, using a range of protocols, so that the psychoanalytic infant, for example, becomes less of a hypothetical creature, to one moderated by actual and systematic observation, using a range of measures. But these in turn are criticised as providing broad classifications that lose subtlety, vitality and the detail of the original material, as in Ratke's account (see Fonagy and Campbell 2015).

Laura disliked what could also be read as a silencing of certain relationships. There are four people (plus an observer) in the room, not two (mother and child, with the therapist as a 'mediator'). The dyadic

punctuation of mother-child relationships is a problem in mainstream psychology. Laura sees a pattern in action here, where the mother's behaviour depends on the context, that could easily become one of judgement and blame. A powerful professional, a woman, and the husband, can appear as neutral presences, but they are not. They are involved and there was a process of referral before the therapy began, and there are expectations about it. Is the mother identified as a patient in this situation? 'The identified patient exhibits behaviour which is almost a caricature of this identity, which is characteristic of all the family members' (Bateson 1972, p. 243). This could explain her clownish behaviour.

Besides, the reaction of the child is lineally seen to be a consequence of the mother's action, and not, as would be the case from a systemic perspective, an organic response to the whole situation. Children are sensitive to the context ('what are mum, dad and this stranger doing here? How should I react?'), and the relationships between adults is their first concern (Fivaz-Depeursinge and Corboz-Warnery 1999). From a systemic perspective, the therapist's speech is addressed to the three of them, not to the infant alone (who is mainly interested in the nonverbal) and it may convey—or enact—a negative master story: 'You, little boy, are confused, I can see it, while your mum is behaving/communicating in a strange way and dad is (I guess) out of the plot'.

The whole situation appears to Laura as a theatrical script (Byng-Hall 1998), where roles are written, but they can still change if people feel secure enough to improvise. Laura sees embarrassment, in the clownish behaviour and in the child's reaction, as frequently happening when working with families, and especially with mothers who know they are always under scrutiny. Embarrassment blocks improvisation; to open up possibility, we need to embrace embarrassment, and play with its manifestations using art, role play etc.

Laura's emotional reaction to the vignette is not simply professional—she supervises family educators and often witnesses this kind of scene—it is the reaction of a woman, academic and mother, who has frequently found herself in the position of justifying what is considered a mother's inadequate behaviour. The therapist's interpretation, as reported by Ratke, can appear unfair. Unfair for all the women who

are blamed for their children's' distress. Could the child be disturbed by something that happened before, by the professional or dad's silence, or some other detail of the situation? Linear causal interpretation offers a narrow view. The systemic perspective looks for circularity, entanglement, complexity. This is why Laura prefers questions to interpretations and leaving open space for many different perspectives. She moved into education after sixteen years of the psychotherapeutic profession, aiming for a more encompassing theory and practice. Psychology is an extraordinary discipline, it provides varied possibilities to understand the human mind, but can also be narrow. On the other hand, Linden presented only an extract from Ratke's thesis, and she illuminated how this therapist, almost systemically, held the whole family in her mind, while engaging with complex dyadic as well as triadic dynamics. Of course, some of the above cannot be proved in an objective, empirical manner, but is the outcome of acute observation and a literary talent to evoke lived experience. It is not pretending to be science in any conventional sense and its truth claims, however problematic, are rooted in verisimilitude, including the role of unconscious fantasy.

But there remains a problem in putting the child (or the individual) in the centre of the scene—and in regarding the mother as the bearer of all the responsibilities for his (her) well-being (Roudinesco 2002). The dyadic view is often considered common sense, and too many people accept such interpretation without blinking an eye. But eyes must blink if we are looking for transformation. A systemic version of the scene celebrates the complexity of relationships among the four interacting people in the room, and on top of this the role of the observer as well as ourselves, in building an acceptable (for whom?) narrative of these experiences. The trouble is that people claim interpretation as fact rather than one perspective on a complex situation in which different ways of seeing can be in play, dialogically.

None of which downplays the relevance of such a case study. As Linden says, we need to know that the child is also us. We have all been children and have experienced confusion, at some moment, in relationships, where it was not clear who the other was, for us, and who we were for her/him/them, and we could not quit the situation because we depended on the people concerned. The learning context, rather than

the mother alone, is responsible for our early experience, the scripts we internalize, the possibilities open to us, and whether to learn improvisation and playfulness. We must learn, indeed, how to give meaning to uncertain relational situations. It is necessary for life, since living is never clear, linear or rational. It is messy. We are lucky if the confusion, in our early years, does not overwhelm us, as often happens, and we retreat existentially and epistemologically. We must overcome this, if we are to become adult, hopefully without too much suffering. We must remember that it was not simply our parents' fault, let alone our mother's, if we too were misread, and anxiety still bothers us. Their situation has to be appreciated, in an historical, cultural, material as well as familial context.

Ratke's vignette is illuminating: similar processes happen in adult learning, although we often fail to see them, because of our limited perspectives or overly rationalist presuppositions. There are moments when we feel confused and unable to play, and someone comes to our aid. It may be a friend or partner, an educator, a tutor at university, or a therapist. Relationships really matter.

There are two examples from Linden's auto/biographical narrative research, in different settings, using psychoanalytic object relations theory. The first is from a study of non-traditional students in universities and focuses on a moment of transition and 'transformation' for a student called 'Brenda' (West 1996, 2011). 'Brenda' (all the names are pseudonyms) was a mature woman student who participated in a longitudinal study of adults in higher education (West 1996, 2011). She was, at the beginning of the research, a nervous, diffident woman of 52, who had underachieved educationally. She was undergoing change and transition in her life and clinging to an unhappy marriage. She talked of being emotionally abused as a child (so brave!) and anxious about her capacity to cope and what others might think of her. She told a story, in the early stages of the research (which was to last for four years, over seven research cycles), of participating in learning as a way of making herself more acceptable to her husband and his friends. She was, she said, investing in higher education because she was fearful that her marriage would disintegrate. She lifted her hands in an interview above her head to indicate that she needed to be up there, with him.

In her early material, higher education represented more of a threat than opportunity, full, as it was, of intelligent people, unlike herself, as she would frame it. She defended against thinking of herself as a learner for fear of being pushed away or inadequate. She emphasised, instead, the fact of being a mother and wife who happened to be studying part-time, at university. Three years later, in progressing towards a degree, she felt stronger and talked of herself as a student in higher education: she could express feelings and ideas—of different kinds—about literature, feminism, higher education and the ambivalent experience of being a learner. This change was mainly due, she said, to the influence of significant others, including teachers, as well as a daughter who was a student too. Interestingly, she strongly identified with specific literary characters: carrying them around in her head, she said, such as a prostitute in the Maupassant short story *Boule de Suif (Suet Pudding)*. She felt like a prostitute in being used and abused by men. Brenda was in counselling at the time and was able to engage with thinking about the emotional aspects of her life and learning, including her capacity for self-denigration.

Brenda talked of specific epiphanies—turning points—revolving around lecturers and their responses. Some, she said, simply talked past or through her. She described one tutor who made her feel understood in her fumbling attempts to contribute to group discussion. She felt seen, in a basic emotional sense, and thought that higher education, at long last, could be for her. This is the psychosocial territory of object relationships—of anxieties contained and of feeling noticed at a primitive, largely unconscious level—enabling a more fulsome engagement and thoughtfulness (including with feminist ideas). A seminar at university constitutes a potential transitional space, in which significant others, and their responses, enable a gradual renegotiation or play of self. A person, like Brenda, came to think and feel differently towards herself and the world. Such intersubjective moments lie at the heart of transformation.

A second case comes from research into a programme called Sure Start (like the American Head Start or Best Start in Australia). The programmes were designed to break cycles of disadvantage and exclusion and Sure Start (and associated Children's Centres) was established in

many areas of England identified as having high levels of deprivation (although the programme has suffered from austerity and reductions in services in recent years). Sure Start and Children's Centres vary, but offer diverse resources: child support, crèches, access to specialist services such as speech and language therapy or child and mental health, as well as varied opportunities for informal and non-formal adult and family learning. The programmes have been controversial, regarded as overly intrusive and/or a way of disciplining morally feckless parents (West 2009).

But there were several players as well as agendas entering the space represented by the programme. Some professionals exploited government rhetoric—on the need to strengthen community capacity building, or improve service delivery via partnership arrangements, or to nourish forms of sustainable local development—to justify highly participatory methods in project management and community regeneration (West 2009). 'Margaret' was a participant in one local project in Kent, the county in which Linden works (West 2009). She came to be actively involved and acted as an advocate for others. She talked, biographically, of being a child perpetually stuck at the back of the class in school and rarely noticed. She struggled in a difficult, abusive family and was wrestling now in an abusive relationship, when Sure Start entered her life. Going to meetings, on her own, was a major step, she said. She lived in isolation, with her young child, but found that 'everyone was really friendly and made you feel welcome. It was relaxed. All the children were happy. It was just nice. Nice surroundings, nice people'. She told us how she got to know people at a time when she needed to rebuild her life. She was surprised to find that 'you did have an input and I felt involved, so […] everyone was just nice and friendly, everyone was the same. They were, they really made you feel welcome. I just felt safe and relaxed.' The quality of the relationships with senior staff was central to her narrative.

However, the project could feel intimidating, especially when she was encouraged to play a fuller part in developing the programme and was asked to serve on the management board. Margaret did not want to say anything at first, in her encounters with professionals and representatives of various agencies. Those people, the 'suits', as she and other

parents put it, 'were there for their own agendas'. But she began to be 'a bit of a nuisance', by insisting, when the going got hard, that the parents should be at the heart of the work. It helped, she said, that the Director and Chair were committed to this and acted, 'like good parents really'. There was lots of role play and simulations before meetings that helped her manage anxieties. She felt seen, understood and able to look and see in turn, because of the emotional attunement of others.

Psychoanalytic perspectives, of various kinds, provide an especial illumination of moments of transformation and how people themselves, in the case of auto/biographical narrative research, give meaning to their experiences. There are different interpretations of what transpires within the psychoanalytic repertoire: in the Freudian scheme, changes in self-understanding or ego strength, are rooted in the reality principle. A movement from being driven by archaic, messy forces in the unconscious, or the 'id', to more of an appreciation of reality as it is. Where id is, ego shall be. This Freudian lexicon is not easily integrated with conventional rationalist accounts of transformation. Ego is but one of our multiple parts, even if its strength matters for negotiating life's tribulations. But how does ego learn to dialogue with the other parts, like the id or subjective and external messiness? A more relationally attuned psychoanalysis, and the idea of a contingent and developmental self, assist here.

Where Freud might be especially helpful is in drawing attention to human frailty, to the inevitability of moments of powerlessness in life, and how we may conspire in our own oppression, most controversially in relation to the God object. Object relations perspectives focus more on the experiencing subject, or self. In transitional and even transformational processes, false or highly defended selves can become, relatively, if never completely open and authentic. Such selves are deeply embodied, as well as contingent and developmental, dependent on good enough relations in early life, and later in compensatory educational and analytic settings.

Education and Psychoanalysis: Chalk and Cheese?

So, the psychoanalytical perspective can offer rich insights into the unconscious ambivalence and complicated relationships at the heart of learning, and in the forging of selves and in associated struggles to transform. There is a body of clinically informed, socially aware, theoretically sophisticated work enabling us to understand how desire for, and resistance to, different objects, including the symbolic, find expression in the stories we tell (Sclater 2004). These insights help us to build more holistic understanding of the centrality of the emotions, the unconscious, and of bodily experience, alongside mind and symbolic work, when interrogating forms that transform. We become attuned to what lies beneath surface appearances, in ourselves as well as others; and to the difficulties of drawing overly rigid boundaries between adult learning and psychotherapy.

6

Soul Work

We have noted Freud's pessimism about human nature, and how he denied the supremacy of culture or rationality over instinctual life, which events in the late 1930s, seemed to confirm. Much earlier, in the first decades of the twentieth century, Freud fell out with Carl Gustav Jung over the primacy of sexual and aggressive instincts or drives. Jung developed a system of ideas where libido was a kind of broader life force, rather than purely sexual, which he saw as central to journeys of transformation. Jung, in such terms, was more the optimist, and his influence on adult education (Levinson 1976) and in the transformative learning literature (Dirkx 1997) has been greater.

Jung, for whatever reason, eagerly embraced the human potential for transformation. There are two core ideas in the application of Jungian theory to educational processes: transformative learning is a kind of 'soul work', and a search to integrate different parts of the psyche in processes of what he called individuation. Like the feminine and masculine parts of who we are, the conscious and unconscious, rationality and spirituality, good and bad, being special and ordinary. We illustrate this, in the second part of the chapter, with the story of Daniel Cohen, a Jewish GP working in inner London.

Jungian theory is rooted in the need for every person to recognize and harmonise polarities: individuation is an ongoing composition of opposites, in ways that are life enhancing. We are living dilemmas, always struggling, and our disorientation is to be worked on as part of becoming the person we can be. Harmonising opposites, in such terms, became very popular in the 1970s, far beyond psychotherapy. It inspired movements and communities that were striving for human flourishing, peace, and ecology: in fact, the theory spoke to many in its apparent simplicity, opening possibilities for a positive integration of who we are; for hope, self-development, and flourishing. Laura has experienced, over more than ten years, in Italy, a form of biographically rooted learning based on Jung as well as Ancient Greek philosophy (Hadot 1995, 2002). This happens in a community of practice called *Philo*, where philosophers, psychoanalysts, educators, academics and teachers meet and collaborate, in order to co-evolve in a culture of transformative practice, inspired by Jung's soul work.

These practices involve recourse to art, literature and theatre as presentational languages that sustain transformation, beyond words and discourse. Jung himself, like Freud, drew on literature, myth and art to make his case. He engaged with various writers, like Dante Alighieri, the Italian author of the Divina Commedia. Jung felt that Dante's ideas emanated from the same creative, universal spirit, working over millennia, to energise and guide our journeys. Freud was more the scientific rationalist who resisted what he saw to be the vagueness, mysticism and the esoteric in Jung's work. He thought that Jung avoided the difficult and disturbing place of sexuality and sexual competitiveness in human life. For Jung libido was broader than a sexual drive, more of a life force within every one of us.

Jung, Libido and the Divine in Us

Jung's paper *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido* was originally published in the *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* in 1911 (Sayers 2003). Janet Sayers, an academic and psychoanalyst, notes how he developed the idea—borrowed from William James (1890)—of two

types of thinking: the logical and the symbolic. The former was more directed and focused, adaptive to reality, while the latter was freer, associative, and guided by unconscious motives. It gave access to primitive and archaic forms of thought, as Jung illustrated in a case study of a young American woman and spiritual researcher, Daisy Miller. She fell in love with a naval officer and found herself writing automatically on a journey from southern Italy to Switzerland. She wrote about God, in a poem and play, driven by libidinal energy. She had diverse associations in her writing encompassing a kaleidoscope of characters from Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Haydn, Longfellow and Wagner. These authors, according to Jung, were conduits for archetypal patterns deeply rooted in ancient forces to help us on our way. Sexual love, or libido, or what Jung called psychic energy, could be transformed into glimpses of divine experience, or the god-image. There is a psychic force within that has potential divinity; in Miller's case, the archetypal patterns led to worshiping the spirit of life (Sayers 2003).

Jung and Freud increasingly differed over the nature and purpose of the libido. For Jung, the libido could be transformed by encounters with the divine, or oneness of creation, working within, which included encounters with various spiritual guides. Freud thought the God idea and notions of the divine were a kind of splitting of our messy, mixed psychologies, and projecting our own potential for goodness into 'God'. We needed to face up to potentially divine as well as difficult, hellish aspects of ourselves, which included, in the case of sons, the Oedipal desire to murder the father to possess the mother. For Jung, the Divine was a symbol of transcendence, of everything beyond our understanding. It can involve unpleasant or rude awakenings because it challenges the pride of Ego and its fantasies of control, as well as the ascendancy of consciousness. The Ego should not dominate. In Jung, the self is far bigger than the experiencing subject: the Divine contains what he called the Numen—the numinous—the existence of which is essential for integrating different parts of the psyche. Jung talks of his experience of the Numen in various parts of his work, including his autobiography (Jung 1963). The self contains a living God or divine archetype working within and beyond us. Fearful, maybe, to engage with, but unavoidable in the psychological work of transformation.

Experiences of the numinous or divine bring awe, bliss, fascination, as well as fear, eeriness, bewilderment, and haunting. An unforgettable but also an ineffable experience: grasping this in conceptual language is difficult. Maybe, it is impossible and best expressed in poetry, music, imaginative writing and myth. It has to do with authentic understanding, and feelings of real presence. Jung's psychology is empirical: his archetypes are not purely mystical but rooted in experience, in feeling, senses, real life events. The experience of the self/God can happen at any moment, in synchronicity, for instance, in the experience of a connection between separate events; and it can be there in artistic creation.

So, encounters with the Divine are considered a place for transformative soul work, by drawing on archetypal patterns, or forms and forces, deeply layered in every one of our psyches. A major epistemological difference between Freud and Jung is the differing ground on which they constructed their systems of thought: on metaphors of energy, matter and blockage of drives, as the prime cause of psychic problems (as in Freud); or of symbols, archetypal and even divine forms of life that help us transform, in narrative and spiritual rather than causal ways. In such terms, Freud was more the materialist, while Jung was rooted in the spiritual aspects of human experience. As Andrew Samuels (2015) puts it, 'Freud spoke for the literal, the instinctual, the causative; Jung for the metaphorical and the teleological, asking 'what is sex really for?'. It can even be 'a symbolic expression of an emotional longing for personal regeneration through the contact with the body of another' (p. 98).

Causal and deterministic processes are the basis of positivism, and Freud could be, even strove to be, the positivist: albeit he also initiated a paradigmatic revolution that challenged empiricism and positivism to the core. Rationality, under Freud's gaze, was often a mask, defending against the more archaic forces of sex and competition. Jung was far from being a positivist and was attracted by mystery and hidden forces that silently act in the world, by the ineffable. He chronicles this in his own biographical struggles and a journey into his psychological breakdown (Jung 1963).

The Jungian system is based on forms, including forms of the divine. Forms have a strong power in shaping our lives, cultures, and history; the power of forms finds vivid expression in great art or writing, and

symbolic action can constitute healing, because it gives expression to the potential unity of opposite polarities within. Moreover, the symbols or metaphors of the libido, or spirit of life, Jung insists, are cross-cultural, like the mandala or circle shape, embodying the essential unity of creation. Conscious suffering was open to transformation via divine or archetypal forms of energy working on our complexes. Psychic energy could be found in the union of opposites such as the anima and animus manifest in male and female consciousness (the anima is the personification of the feminine nature in the male unconscious, and the animus is the masculine energy available in the female unconscious). Such creative power could be repressed in gendered rigidity. Here was a more optimistic reading of the human capacity for transformation, through the power, in effect, of love or spirit, empowered by archetypal energies in the collective unconscious, inherited from our ancestors, and a consequence of human struggle over millennia.

Spielrein and Embracing Mutual Transformation

Jung was much influenced by his relationship with Sabina Spielrein, which came to wider attention through David Cronenberg's film, *A Dangerous Method*. This is a 2011 German-Canadian-American-British film, starring Keira Knightley, Viggo Mortensen, Michael Fassbender, and Vincent Cassel. The screenplay was adapted by writer Christopher Hampton from his 2002 stage play *The Talking Cure*, based in turn on the 1993 non-fiction book by John Kerr, *A Most Dangerous Method: The Story of Jung, Freud, and Sabina Spielrein*. Set on the eve of World War I, the film describes the turbulent relationship between Jung, the founder of analytical psychology and Freud, father of psychoanalysis. Spielrein became a patient of Jung and later a physician and one of the first female psychoanalysts. The movie purports to deal with these real people and real events in their lives and relationships and yet, in true Hollywood fashion, there is quite a bit of invention to hold the audience's attention. Of course, the average viewer will not know fact from fiction unless they research the historical detail, which most never will (Sayers 2003).

The film's title, 'A Dangerous Method,' derives from a letter by William James written in 1910 to a colleague. James (1920) wrote, with reference to Freud, '… he made on me personally the impression of a man obsessed with fixed ideas. I can make nothing in my own case with his dream theories, and obviously 'symbolism' is a most dangerous method.' (p. 328). In fact it is the darker or shadow side of early psychoanalysis that Cronenberg focuses on. Spielrein was an extremely bright Russian Jewess, who aged 19 was brought to the Burghölzli mental hospital, where Jung worked as a young psychiatrist. She showed extreme symptoms of what at the time was known as hysteria. The traditional treatment for hysteria was hypnosis, but Jung elected to try a new approach, psychoanalysis, or 'the talking cure', under the influence of Freud. The treatment lasted for ten months, during which time her symptoms abated to the point that she assisted Jung in his word-association research; and from thereon was considered cured. Jung supported her desire to go to medical school, where she eventually became a psychiatrist and then a pioneering analyst herself, elected to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in 1911. She continued working with Jung on and off during her years of medical and psychoanalytic training. She was also analysed by Freud in Vienna.

Spielrein embraced the term transformation, and her ideas influenced Jung. She came to see transformative psychoanalytic processes as having to do with changing and challenging neurotic complexes. There was, she thought, an instinct for transformation (Sayers 2003). In attempting or struggling to deal with our complexes, we seek similar complexes in others (in Spielrein's case an obsession born of seeing her father spanking her older brother, which led to a compulsive concern for her anus and the prevention of defecation; and subsequently masturbation, evoked by 'blissfully shuddersome feelings'). Nevertheless, via love, intimacy and art, transformation was possible. She gave expression to some of this transformative instinct in her intimate relationship with Jung. In her dream work, Spielrein expressed the wish to have a child by him. She enthralled Jung, but the relationship was turbulent for both. They were excited by the similarities of their ideas (around the importance of the verbal and symbolic), and Spielrein wrote of how their souls were deeply akin. They talked of higher callings, as children of the God

archetype. Jung himself thought he was instrumental in awakening the power of religious or mythological forms in her. He in turn was able to encounter the divine through his deep acceptance of her and her spirit (Sayers 2003).

She forgave Jung for what many continue to see as his transgressive sexual behaviour and she felt that their relationship was mutually transformative. She returned to her native Russia in 1923 and was later murdered at the hands of a German SS squad in 1942; her diaries and correspondence with Jung and Freud were only discovered in Zurich, many years later. The bestiality of what we can call European collective psychic history eventually consumed her.

Into the Dark: Dante's Journey of Death and Rebirth

Daniela Boccassini (2017) has drawn fascinating parallels between Jung's understanding of transformative processes and what she considers to be his profound appreciation of Dante. She notes how commentators such as James Hillman (1983) have considered Jung's greatest contribution to modernity to be one of giving substance to the Delphic oracle's injunction to know thyself, or to achieve self-knowledge. Jung saw psychology to be an experiential discourse of learning from the soul, rather than learning about it, in some detached way. Consciousness had to do with the full realisation of the unconscious, in all its complexity, in each of our lives. Chronicled in what Jung called his Red Book (Jung 2009), and mirroring Freud, to an extent, he sought to liberate himself from an auto-congratulating, ideologically rigid, narrow minded establishment, through an unqualified commitment to the deepest possible engagement with the breadth and depth of soul work. Visionary literature was one means to this end, as in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Here was a blueprint for the journey of soul. Boccassini claims that Jung's inner journey of death and rebirth can be understood in Dantean terms. Erudition and the intellect were simply insufficient for the task. Rather it had to do with a kind of initiatory transition into and beyond the depths of

who we might be, towards a numinosity or divine inspiration. A visionary transition into the dark reaches or night side of life, and beyond, towards transformation.

Jung was fascinated by what he saw to be archetypes, or visions, guides and teachers, which is where Dante was an inspiration: in his *Divine Comedy*, and its poetic qualities, evoking the soul's journey. Dante finds guides or teachers like Virgil and Beatrice. Beatrice, 'Bice' the daughter of Folco Portinari, was a Florentine woman who has been considered the prime inspiration for the Beatrice, one of his guides in the *Divine Comedy* (*La Divina Commedia*), in the last four cantos of *Purgatorio* and in the last book, *Paradiso.* There she takes over as guide from the Latin poet Virgil because, as a pagan, Virgil cannot enter Paradise; while she, being the incarnation of beatific love, as her name suggests, can lead him towards the Beatific vision.

Such archetypes are timeless imprints that find expression in culturally and individually specific ways, like Beatrice or Virgil, but their properties are transcultural and trans-individual reflecting a common human inheritance across cultural difference. Episodes of earthly love, as with Spielrein, were conduits to a larger, divine comedy or poetry of the soul. Our transformation lies in forces beyond our own struggles to know. Dante himself, in the face of the personal and cultural distress of his time, began to pay attention to his dreams, and to visions and apparitions. For Jung, the journey is about aloneness as a basic oneness, what we can call a state of connectedness with something bigger than the ego, a glimpse of transformative divine potential that we may all experience. This reading of the *Divine Comedy* is a process of individuation or transformation, while transcendence is a profound shift in the wayfarer's mind and soul. As Boccassini (2017) puts it:

> Already at the outset, Dante's darkest moment of despair coincides with the upholding of a ray of hope. Once he realizes he is lost in the impenetrable wood of life, from that very realization a new awareness suddenly springs forth: «mi ritrovai». «I found myself» is the paradox of this initial experience, of seeing oneself simultaneously lost and found, which in turn paves the way for the appearance of Virgil, the inner guide to whose higher wisdom («saggezza») the wayfarer entrusts himself, having

miserably failed all other reasonable human attempts to overcome the obstacles that block his way… (p. 5)

Hell, or the inferno, is traversed with the help of Virgil's wisdom, and the spirit of new ways of knowing. And by Beatrice's guidance too, as well as the Virgin Mary, in a kind of union of soul and spirit, enabling him to see the world as it is rather than how we, as individuals, or whole groups fabricate it. Dante is eventually able to enter a kind of earthly paradise, where he is open to the teachings of Beatrice. He has moved from a self-centered, neurotic Florentine consciousness, to a condition of statelessness, and selflessness, and a more universal consciousness, in which love overcomes strife and desperation. In Jungian terms, Dante's inferno is where the shadow side rules—all that we pretend not to be—and we often project what we dislike in ourselves on to others. Purgatory is where the union of consciousness and the unconscious is possible—if with immense suffering—while in Paradise the soul is reshaped and can then serve to help others on the way. A universal sympathy and generosity towards others are born through the recognition of one's own lapses and the withdrawal of the shadow. Boccassini writes:

> So now everything begins to make sense. During his life on earth, Dante, just like everyone else, was seduced by shadows and projections, the divisive (diabolical) images of good, which the psyche projects onto reality. As a consequence, he has fallen victim to his own dreams turned into nightmares. But to recognize this is not enough. Beyond the devious images that emerge from the personal unconscious lie the archetypes, which are real images of good in that they meet their promises in full. Properly speaking, these are symbolic images because they are unitive, and therefore have the power to reintegrate the individual mind where it belongs, that is to say within the vastness of the cosmic mind. (p. 10)

There are connections, here, with Chapters 7 and 9, where we explore the role of the body and symbols in unitive experience, to overcome diabolic dis-connections and celebrate the pattern which connects. So, archetypal energies and inspiration are helpful forces in the journey

through darkness and suffering towards a relative state of repose and wisdom. The trouble, however, is, as in Dante's time, that the seduction of staying the same, and of splitting and projective destructiveness, remain powerful. And the culture or society around us is deeply divisive, based on an epistemology of disconnection. Dante was a political fugitive from Florence and war between two factions. Inner and outer worlds may mirror each other.

Jung drew various parallels between the kind of journey within his 'analytic psychotherapy' and religious processes, especially Catholicism. Soul must ultimately work on soul for transformation, as in, potentially, an I/thou exchange of the Catholic confession. He came to define four stages to the analytic process, two more than Freud (Sayers 2003). The first he called catharsis, which was getting in touch with the secrets we keep from ourselves or do not want to know about. The second was an elucidation of the transference, and how patients need to become more conscious of this, if they are to progress. Intriguingly for our present purposes, he identified two further stages, education and transformation. The educational phase was about the therapist being open to learning from the patient, in the counter-transference, as he had done with Spielrein. The fourth and final stage was the move towards transformation, in which both patient and analyst examine aspects of their natures that continue to haunt: to face denied or disdained aspects of themselves which inhibit psychological growth. Penitents, parishioners, and patients can only feel fully accepted by their priests, pastors or therapists, providing the latter fully accept themselves. This touches on the work that educators might do, in many settings. To face our own shadows and projections if we are to be fully available, as guides and mentors to others. In this way healing replaces destructive forces and the divine finds space to guide every one of us on our way.

These 'divine' aspects of Jung's ideas have been much criticised. Higher authority, whether archetypes or God-figures, could be associated with fascism and Nazism, with which Jung flirted (Sayers 2003). The archetype of the saviour, or leader who embodied the best of a nation led, at the very least, to a fascination with Hitler. The true leader, Jung thought, has the courage to be fully himself. Someone who embodies the best of a particular nation or group. National Socialism

had replaced 'the garbage bin of unrealisable infantile wishes and unre-solved family resentment' (cited in Samuels 2015, p. 151). Jung tended to label psychology itself as grounded in cultural or even national as well as supra-national characteristics. There was a Jewish psychology that claimed universality but was actually a product of rootlessness and state-lessness and he rejected its wider validity claims in such terms (Samuels 2015). In troubling echoes of National Socialism, he argued that the Aryan peoples were more rooted in the earth, from which fulsome transformation could spring.

Andrew Samuels (2015) asks whether there is something deep within the Jungian approach that made it susceptible to anti-Sem-itism. Jung's ideas about transformation, for instance, may be infused with an anti-Semitic shadow very much his own. Samuels argues that this problem must be faced in intelligent and humane ways. Jung has suffered because of these associations and they should be tackled head on. Samuels plots how civilization or higher levels of consciousness and achievement came to be associated, over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the nation state. Cultural nationalism came to the fore, rather than any supra-national imagination. For Jung, soil or earth was to have profound even mystical significance in the development of collectivities like America or Germany. This too easily leads to a self-congratulatory ethic of superiority, that our armies and families are better than yours. As are our Gods.

Samuels believes that Jungianism, and we might add notions of trans-formation, can be rescued from Jung himself. He took certain charac-teristics as in-born, pre-defined rather than grounding understanding in lived experience. Jung had suggested, as noted, that wholeness lay in bringing together opposites, like German or Jew, female and male, anima and animus. The sophisticated urbanite comes to comple-ment the earthy peasant warrior. There is arguably too much stress on complementarity here, in processes of transformation. What can be done instead is to embrace the actual diversity of experience, or peo-ple, especially those from marginalised or minority groups. By getting them to consciously articulate what they may implicitly know but is stereotypically denied in the wider culture, such as their own diversity. In processes of transformation being a Jew, an American woman, an

Afro-American or German; or a white English male or for that matter an Italian woman, becomes more experientially grounded, including how we can challenge the power of negative projections of class, race, gender or sexuality, and of what is marginalised in ourselves. Difference is not predefined or essentialised, but lived auto/biographically, returning, in a sense, to Jung's desire not to see the imposition of one kind of psychological understanding on everyone. In a way, we come back to the importance of grounding journeys of transformation in our auto/biographical particularities, using symbolic forms that can illuminate our specific journeys as well as what we share in common.

Transformative Learning and Education: A Pedagogy of Transformation

Jack Mezirow, in dialogue with John Dirkx (Dirkx et al. 2006), summarised his view of transformative learning as a rational process based on a metacognitive application of critical thinking that transforms an acquired *frame of reference*—a mind-set or worldview of orienting assumptions and expectations, involving values, beliefs, and concepts—by assessing its epistemic assumptions. This process makes frames of reference gradually more inclusive, discriminating, reflective and open to other ways of seeing. This is, in Mezirow's terms, how an adult thinks (2012). Although much learning lies beyond conscious awareness, and is deeply emotional, which Mezirow acknowledges, the essential change agent is rationality. John Dirkx, deeply influenced by Jung, makes a different claim:

> Those of us who take seriously the 'transformative' in transformative learning are interested in a kind of 'deep' learning that challenges existing, taken-for-granted assumptions, notions, and meanings of what learning is about. In exploring the nature of deep learning, some writers focus on the cognitive, epistemic, and sociocultural dimensions of the process. My interests revolve around a kind of learning that integrates our experiences of the outer world, including the experiences of texts and subject matter, with the experience of our inner worlds. Although my focus is

unabashedly on the subjective, the goal is to develop understanding of this subjective world that is fundamentally human and archetypal. Many of our great psychodynamic scholars used their own inner lives and those around them to explore more deeply the complex and troubling phenomena presented by the human psyche. (Dirkx et al. 2006, pp. 126–127)

Dirkx employs the metaphor of soul work to suggest the complexity of transformative learning. He understands that these ideas can seem mystical and vague. However, inspired by Jung, he is interested in shadowy inner worlds, and dreams and fantasies, that often volunteer questions without being asked. Dirkx's own psyche, like ours, is a complex community of characters, such as the censor, the judge, the trickster and the child. The inner world may occasionally be a place of peace and beauty but is often turbulent. Dirkx wants to restore the idea of soul to the everyday world of higher or adult education: to the awesome beauty of a text, to powerful feelings of seeing clearly, to the inspiration of a lecture, and to a moment of interaction in the classroom that stirs our soul and wills us to continue the pilgrimage of learning or self-knowledge. We can share our experiences and struggles to know with others, which can be inspirational for them in turn. Dirkx quotes the fifteenth-century English poet John Donne, 'No man is an island entire of itself. Everyman is a piece of the continent, a part of the main'. This echoes the sense of communion, and a community of learners, at the heart of both Jung and Dante. Learning becomes a fundamentally collective as well as individual journey, an encounter with the sacred, transcendent and our flawed humanity, in acts of selfless love by teachers in the classroom or doctors in their clinics.

These ideas contain suggestions for a pedagogy of transformation, beyond individual and rational learning. Communities can be spaces for educational improvement, using soul work as a force towards integration, solidarity, mutual recognition, and a spirit of fraternity or sorority. At the beginning of the Nineties, Laura started a methodological exploration of educational cultures among groups of adult learners, professionals, psychotherapists, and university students, where auto/biographical methods ('how did I become the person I am?') merge with embodied and sensory experience, like walking in the woods, or

meditating, or artwork of many kinds (drawing, dancing, performing); and more recently for mythobiography (a Jungian practice of symbolic auto/biography), Socratic dialogue as well as philosophical and poetical readings. These educational practices can sustain transformation without controlling or instructing people. They involve an invitation to adults to improvise and play, setting aside any need to explain, decide or be consciously aware of everything.

Laura is profoundly indebted, in her soul work, to the philosophical community of practice called Philo, founded in 2006, with a group of colleagues from different academic and professional disciplines. The idea was to create a space for individual and collective learning, in the city of Milan. Philo is not a secluded place for an élite of privileged intellectuals but rather for an inclusive group of deeply involved people in the life of their city; and it offers its service to the community. This includes free analytical sessions and group mythobiography for those who cannot afford the highly expensive and exclusive journey of psychoanalysis. Soul work is rooted in context and granted to everybody in their own terms: this has become Laura's main preoccupation.

A Case Study: The Transformative Play of the 'Feminine and Masculine' in Learning to Be a Doctor

Linden illustrated some of these relational, spiritual and transformative processes in his longitudinal, auto/biographical narrative research, over three years, among General Practitioners or family physicians, working in difficult, emotionally demanding parts of inner London (West 2001). The study illustrates the play of opposites, the experienced feminine and masculine, the material and spiritual, science and the spirit in learning to be a doctor. Dr. Daniel Cohen was one of 25 doctors in the study who felt himself to be an outsider in medicine. He suffered a big crisis in his work, 8 years before the study:

[…] the scale of the work and the endlessness of it. The scale being that you can go in at 8 in the morning and be dealing with people's pain continually without a break and go on till 7 or 8 in the evening: to a degree and with a volume that I think is almost inconceivable for most other outsiders. There are very few professions which have got any sort of an analogous workload in terms of its volume or its intensity. But also the endlessness in that there isn't any clear career development. For a GP there is no obvious evolution from that point, which you may reach age 37/38. So the point at which you're expecting to retire in another 30 plus years.

Daniel went into psychotherapy and trained as a therapist, which gave him space for personal development and for cultivating better self and cultural knowledge. Questions of self, family, of being a man, and Jewish, were inseparable from his work as a GP. There was no neat distinction between questions of '*Who am I?*' or '*Where do I come from?*' or '*Why do I have the kind of problems that I think I have?*' and those such as '*Why am I doing my work - what is the nature of my work?*', '*How can I best help the people I'm working with - what is the nature of their problems?*'. There was a seamless web connecting the doctor to patients, their story to his. Daniel's inner world consisted of conversations involving many characters. There was the heroic GP who could solve everything. There was the consumerist patient who said, '*I've read about this thing and I'm as informed as you are and I want it*'. There was the sceptic within who insisted GPs had little time. Sometimes one character predominated, at other moments, someone else. The characters shifted in significance, and each might enter the dialogue, at any moment. Two patients might say of the same drug '*I demand it because I've heard it's a miracle drug*' and '*how dare you give this to me, I've read that it causes cancer in rats*'. Every consultation had its cast of characters and conflicting stories within the doctor as well as the patient. It was a question of living with the diversity, and learning, empathically, how to respond in the moment.

Wanting to Be a Psychiatrist

Daniel never intended to be a GP and imagined himself as a psychiatrist or a psychoanalyst. However, he felt alienated in medical training, even repulsed by institutional psychiatry and simply could not see himself working within the '*National Health Service mental health culture*', with its unreflexive, drug dominated assumptions. He was drawn towards paediatrics, which he thought a discipline combining feelings, including gentleness, with technical and medical expertise; a more feminine culture, so to speak. Except he kept failing exams. He had a poor grasp of the technical detail needed, for instance, to be a neonatal pediatrician. You had to be a very good thinking scientist, he said, which he wasn't. So, he went on to become a GP:

> I think that general practice is at the feminine end of a masculinised culture. I think general practice has always been more touchy/feely, although it is looking over its shoulder the whole time to keep up its street cred with the real blokes in the hospitals.

But there was a struggle, in the profession, between the masculine and the feminine:

> […] two simultaneous processes going on …in a kind of dialectic. One is a hyper masculinisation of the profession … and the grasping of power by GPs … on the one hand, and on the other hand a development of a much more reflective stance among a minority of GPs… And certain people like myself will identify themselves with the 'feminine' position and certain people won't…

> I am constantly striving to contain and manage those sorts of moments in order to create space for feminine types of experience to be possible…. Acceptance, tolerance, understanding of process rather than events and outcomes…things that are fluid rather than things that are chopped up and categorised. A sense of connection and of connection being more important than anything and of values…

A patient came to mind as he told the story:

> She had an illness of a rather mysterious cause and insisted that she
> needed medication for it and a referral to a psychiatric nurse, all of
> which I facilitated in a quite a sort of agency type way, in the hope and
> the expectation that if I stuck with her through this and continued to see
> her once a month, ostensibly for a review of her medication, that things
> would emerge. And inevitably after many months have passed she is able
> to actually reframe what she has gone through in terms of a highly unsat-
> isfactory marriage which …she wasn't really able to face up to before. She
> is able to see in a way that she… needed the illness to give her time out
> and to give her time to reflect on this…, [she] has now on her own initi-
> ative come off the anti-depressants, is looking at the possibilities of coun-
> selling and therapy so that I suppose I have accepted the constraints of
> a world in which people expect and demand to be diagnosed and medi-
> cated in the interests of what I see as a more important long term project
> which is actually to explore new meaning in their lives.

Recovering Roots: How Telling One's Story Entails Soul Work

Daniel had long been involved in integrating different parts of his
identity:

> and finding to my astonishment really that being Jewish and the child
> of refugees who had fled from Nazism was actually a hugely important
> part of my identity. Something which sounds absurd now, it was some-
> thing that had never even crossed my mind that it might be an impor-
> tant part of who Daniel Cohen was. …it was sort of therapy that led me
> to a review of all of that really and to an understanding that I couldn't,
> I couldn't shrug it off…and there was suddenly a burgeoning among
> people of my generation in the late '70s, early '80s, of a curiosity about
> where we had come from and challenging our parents…about the way
> they had dealt with their experiences and so there has been a massive kind
> of 'outing' if you like, of the second generation of refugee children and a

massive return to the community and to religion. But I also think there has been a focus on ethnicity and a pride in ethnicity that has also surfaced in the wider community around the same time. And it has obviously been happening with Afro-Caribbean people….with Muslims. There is a lot of communities where people, who were actually quite ashamed about their origins in the '60s and '70s, are actually now fiercely proud of it and finding some way to express it. And I think what happened to the Jewish community was part of the wider collective reowning of ethnicity….

His growing spiritual conviction was part of the process. Towards the end of one interview Daniel said:

[…] I was having a conversation with myself at one point about why am I not bringing in more of - one particular dimension of my life which is very much connected with my wife, who is a minister of religion. I don't know if you're aware my wife is doing this, and so I have a third job as a minister's spouse, and it is actually enormously important to me and it affects my work in all sorts of ways. And I was actually asking myself at one point why I wasn't bringing that into play, so it was interesting I, by Freudian slip, I phoned her at the beginning of this interview! Clearly wanting to bring her in in some way, and I suppose that is the most feminine and feminised of all the different kind of aspects of my work. And it is work, I mean I go as a spouse to her congregational events and so on. So, there is all of that, that I was sort hovering on the edge of what I was saying and didn't quite come in.

Linden and David shared thoughts about spirituality and 'God' in the doctor/patient, analyst/client interaction:

If I can use the theological language it was actually about creating God, it was not there to describe God or try and convince oneself of God as an external objective rather punitive power, but that actually this was about reviving, sustaining and the constant continuous creation of God. I suppose it is about…perceiving oneself as a participant in continuous creation, which cannot be about reason. It can only be about values and meaning and conviction and an act of faith, of actually saying…this will only happen if I will it to happen. That it is a matter of making it for oneself, making God for oneself…. And suddenly you realise in General

Practice that you are engaged with somebody jointly in a sort of desperately important struggle about how to be good, how to be real, how to make a choice which is right and it's often to do with life and death. …I become aware that the sort of paraphernalia of medicine and prescriptions and operations and referrals and all of that is really a kind of lower order manifestation really of something which is spiritual.

The awareness of his spiritual side came as a shock to someone brought up as a rationalist, with a quasi-Marxist world view. He had treated the spiritual with a kind of contempt. However, he now thought it was a search for meaning and values which were far more important than materialism. This happened within his work and a personal struggle for meaning and purpose. Soul work as the basis of transformative learning. It included engaging with his family history in which there had been an

unspoken imperative to succeed and not to rebel…I don't think I had anything that could remotely be described as an adolescence. I think I was just sort of completely studious and privately very distressed and outwardly tremendously successful, like hundreds of Jewish teenagers I knew….

He came to recognise that he acted as a kind of bridge, a guide, for many of his patients as an old Jewish GP in the East End of London had once done for his own family, when they sought sanctuary. There was he said an emotional texture in visits to the doctor, which he now identified to be about creating safety and containment. He introduced a Somali woman refugee, and her young, suffering child into the story. His role was to provide a secure base in a technical but also common-sense understanding: of providing a place to be looked after, dependably, in a loving way. He thought that learning to be human was at the core of learning to work effectively with others:

[…] I remember a therapist saying he would be deeply suspicious of any doctor or psychiatrist who wasn't in the job principally to make themselves better. That if you are not on a kind of journey, trying to understand yourself and make yourself whole then you are probably a bit messianic and so I think that is at the heart. And I hope that as a sort of spin off of that, other people get helped as well.

Daniel saw himself as situated between the truth discourse of mainstream medicine and the uncertainties and messiness of whole people, living in a harsh environment. A subversive synthesis was required by taking what was essential from the medical model but locating it within a person and narrative-focused, even spiritual practice of mutual learning.

Conclusion: Transformative Learning as Soul Work

Mezirow insisted that transformative learning involves, at a crucial stage, a rational process of critically assessing epistemic assumptions. It is this dimension, Mezirow argues, that saves transformative learning from being reduced to something like faith, prejudice, vision, or desire. If significant learning outside or beyond conscious awareness is accessed, it can be brought into conscious awareness as part of deliberate critical interrogation. Dirkx (Dirkx et al. 2006) offers a different perspective (as do Daniel Cohen, Jung and Dante). He provides a case study of an adult student who was transformed through an encounter with another culture, in Central America, where issues of time and being, were to the fore. This was very different to America—less pressured, laid back, more about community, less individualistic. The student realised some of the damaging and constraining aspects of his own biography and enculturation in American society. He was raised in an authoritarian family, where being still or taking time was considered sinful; and now the experience of different cultural rhythms brought personal and even spiritual release. It was not simply an epistemic shift, rather repressed psychic energy finding space and understanding. News from psyche, in an encounter with otherness, we might frame it. And of course, Laura adds, the embodied experience of different rhythms, food, smells, light, relationships, all had a role too.

Dirkx's example resonates with Dr. Cohen's story where a changing frame of reference is infused with largely unconscious psychic forces that are neglected in conventional critical reflection processes. In fact, reflective work is more complicated when meeting powerful dynamics

like those above. We enter a border country, we could say, between therapy and learning, the socio-cultural and internal world. Of course, there are elements of critical rationality, but the changing intersubjective and intrasubjective dynamics seem more fundamental: in journeys from Hell, which we all experientially know, through purgatorial moments, which we might have encountered, onwards to a kind of blissful satisfaction in helping others, or in realising that there can be different ways of being, and we are free to choose.

We need therefore a methodology that recognises and illuminates such potentially powerful energies, allowing them gradual expression, within growing conscious awareness. We require a good enough relationship with such forces and one way is to build imaginal dialogue to keep psychic and spiritual life in harmony with the intellectual and auto/biographic, rather than wrenched apart. The process necessitates a quality of reflexivity that is psychic, intuitive, experiential and emotional, as well as cultural and critically analytic. It requires attunement to self and constant learning from experience rather than premature or formulaic closure. Its methods can include journaling, writing, psychotherapy, presentational knowing, art-based education, and spiritual practice to bring lived encounters of opposites, or what has been marginalised, into a more harmonious relationship with who we are. We must identity, in the process, our propensity for splitting and projecting negativity on the other. Unconscious energies then become available to consciousness and help heal our splits and polarities. This is how adult education, and transformative learning, might re-enchant a wider lifelong learning journey. But a new dimension needs to enter our roadmap. The body, and embodied experiences of learning, is the next landmark on the pilgrimage.

7

Body Matters

In this chapter of our pilgrimage, we meet a systemic perspective, based on Gregory Bateson's work and complexity theory, to explore learning as an emergent feature of multiple levels of interaction. Transformation never happens within the individual organism alone but involves significant and proximal webs of relationships, groups and organisations; as well as changes in the broader society and the ecosystem. Systemic theories celebrate the 'pattern which connects' (Bateson 1979), the biological, narrative, socio-material, embodied, and embedded dimensions of learning, beyond individual cognitive life. The 'pattern which connects' is a sensitising concept to help us cultivate wider perspectives on lifelong learning and adult education (Formenti 2018), and to interrogate a range of epistemological issues in our culture. In the light of such a concept, individual behaviour, or affects, take on a different meaning when perceived for example in the context of the family. Moreover, this perspective may appear relatively optimistic in relation to transformation, as a process that happens *notwithstanding* our conscious effort. What is negative at one level can be positive at another: we begin, then, to look at a whole system as it manifests itself, without trying to judge or modify it. Acceptance, surrender, wisdom are key words in the systemic

vocabulary: it is an invitation to celebrate interdependence, uncertainty, human fragility and imaginative hope.

Sofia and Clues into a Transition—Laura's Tale

I met Sofia during a biographically oriented co-operative workshop. Her story illuminates, from a systemic viewpoint, the implications of returning to university at a mature age. She is 42, and a primary school teacher. She does not have a degree, which was not required when she began working. After a year, however, at university, she is thinking of giving up; the courses are not designed for working students. She tells her story at a workshop attended by nine other students; she is the only mature person present, apart from the facilitator. She talks of what it means to her to be at university when working full time, with two children, a busy husband, and occasional help from a sister. Without the latter it would be difficult 'to keep on keeping on'. Her relatives, friends and colleagues think that she has a job. She does not really need this degree, in such terms. She is a good actress: she creates voices and faces to keep up appearances, while she repeats the mantra: 'You should take care of your children'. But she does not agree: 'It's not for the degree. It's for me. I'm trying to open my mind. If I am doing this, it's for the children too'. Around her, the other students nod. There are obvious echoes of Ibsen's Nora here.

When we invite the participants to make a drawing of their present situation, Sofia's sketch represents different symbols for family members and colleagues—but not for herself. She wonders about her way of representing her dilemma, to herself, and realises for the first time that the issues go far beyond dropping or not dropping out of a programme. The meaning of the choice for her, in her life and in relation to her identity, is at stake. After the workshop, she feels relieved and says there is no need to rush the decision. She needs time to reflect. Voicing her experience, listening and reacting to others' stories, has re-connected her to herself, to context, and others. She has expressed her embodied and embedded ideas, built in interactions with significant others, whose voices were powerfully presented during the workshop and whose roles in her story were symbolized in her drawing.

The workshop is based on a 'biographically oriented' cooperative method of inquiry (Heron 1996; Formenti 2018) that uses aesthetic languages to open possibilities, beyond an existing existential plot. This has prompted Sofia to take some distance from her proximal system—her family—its weaknesses, bonds, and her own positioning. Maybe she will draw a clearer boundary between herself and significant others after this. There are clues, indeed, that new possibilities have been opened: maybe a *transition* 'into a new quality of self—and world-reference—a process which leaves neither the learning nor the ambient structural context unchanged' (Alheit 2015, p. 26).

Sofia's story is like many that are heard in guidance and life design activities with adult learners. It reveals that learning concerns much more than individual or psychic transformation. Laura has used it to reveal how complexity theory can sustain a different understanding of narratives, as embodied and embedded processes (Formenti 2018). Stories of adult learning contain multiple dimensions and layers. Sofia's narrative is strongly related to her context(s) of living—family, workplace and university, which do not seem to sustain her choice at present—and to the larger context of society, where a woman, worker, mother, in effect, has no real right to further education. But the conversation she is having, here and now, in the workshop, creates a safe space, a space for thinking. New information enters the system and can begin to transform it.

In the systemic perspective, many entangled contexts and constraints shape adult behaviour and learning. We can imagine at least three 'levels of understanding'; the phrasing helps us to avoid reification: levels belong, in fact, to the world of ideas, they are creations of our minds. We should view them heuristically rather than reify them (Formenti 2011b). Firstly, at the micro-level, Sofia relies on her embodied, only partially conscious perception to interpret her situation. In this regard, her self-organising subjectivity is at stake: perception, emotions, interpretations of experience are, for an individual, strongly interconnected; they are signifiers of difference, built and expressed by her voice. She embodies her story in a unique way, due to (hence revealing) her mind/body structure, shaped by previous learning and constantly responding to sensorial information from a present context. Self-organisation is the way of life, in systemic theories.

Shifting our perspective, to the meso-level, we can see inter-subjectivity in play: Sofia's life-world is created by ongoing interactions in everyday conversation. A family system can be considered a self-organizing and transforming structure of a higher order, as Laura learned in her training as a family systems therapist (Burbatti and Formenti 1988). Such a group creates a culture of its own, with its own values, myths (Formenti 2014) and scripts (Byng-Hall 1995), about what is expected of a certain subject, who belongs to a particular group. Sofia's identity as a learner is built by feed-back loops telling her what is expected, what is a good mother, a teacher, a student in higher education, and so on. Her systems of relationships (family, work, university) shape her action and are shaped by it, circularly. The workshop itself, where the story was produced (a university programme using narrative methods in career guidance, see Formenti 2016; Formenti and Vitale 2016) constitutes such a circular conversation. This meso-level (Alheit and Dausien 2000, 2007; Formenti 2011b; Bohlinger et al. 2015) is under-interrogated in grand theories of adult education; surprisingly, since education is *precisely* a theory/practice of relationships and interactions shaping human behaviour, meaning and values.

From a macro-level perspective, we can then see how social structures and discourses sustain certain ideas and epistemologies, which may be historically and politically determined. Sofia's story is evidently related to gender, class, culture, and influenced by hegemonic narratives of primary teachers as mostly women, carers of children, not needing much education. As a mature student in higher education, she experiences the 'typical' constraints of non-traditional learners (Finnegan et al. 2014). So, in a sense, she is determined by these discourses. Biographical research in adult education has built critical awareness of the relevance of this macro-level in understanding the social nature of subjectivity, beyond being a 'purely psychological' fact (Salling Olesen 2012; Alheit 2009, 2015; West 2016). From a systemic perspective, self-organization is a feature too of larger organisations and social structures, which are treated as systems in their own right.

During the biographical workshop, Sofia seemed to arrive on the verge of a possible change of her set of presuppositions. But, exactly, what 'form' is being transformed here? Is it her story? Her persona? Her

deeper self? Her *posture*, physically and symbolically? Her relationship with significant others? Her relationship with us, the university, the larger system? We are witnessing not only an individual learning process, isolated from context(s), dis-connected from the sentient body. All the levels interact with one another. What will happen, when she goes back home? Will her new born awareness encourage her to have serious conversations with her husband, friends, and colleagues? Will her webs of affiliation transform with 'her'? And what about the larger system's transformation?

Each level of understanding has to be explained according to its own processes and cannot be reduced as a sub-set of another; rather they interact, influencing each other in entangled ways. Education can use these ideas to avoid linear thinking and the drift of individualism and dis-connection, in order to develop a more comprehensive theory (and practice) of what is at stake when we talk of learning and how it is fostered.

Multiple Levels of Learning

Bateson's theory of learning and communication (1964) is based on the capacity of the living organism to grasp and transform information (perceived differences) about its environment. It entails interaction with the environment that circularly shapes the organism and its world, by feed-back loops. Learning is living. Hence, at a very basic level, it is a biological process. We are no different, in this regard, from any other organism, like an amoeba or a sequoia forest. But the way our species evolved created multiple layers of complexity in our way of learning. Bateson draws on the theory of logical types developed by Russell and Whitehead[1] to articulate 4 logical levels of learning and communication, which we met earlier in the book:

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[1]The basic tenet of this theory is that no class, or class of classes, can be a member of itself, neither can it be a nonmember. The name is not the thing named, and the menu is not the dinner. Errors of logical typing, however, are common in social sciences, and in human life; they generate paradoxes that can produce pathology, confusion, or creativity and new possibilities. In contrast to Russell and Whitehead, Bateson arrived at the conclusion that Nature does not work in a logical way.

- Learning 0 is the capacity to respond consistently with one's own structure: our body registers some differences, not all of them;
- Learning I is a change in quantity or the quality of one's response, drawn from a given set of alternatives (what we conventionally call learning);
- Learning II is a change in the set of alternatives (learning to learn, that is the building of meaning, presuppositions, frameworks, identities);
- Learning III entails a (rare and challenging) transformation of our way of setting alternatives (a transformation of the self and world-view) (Bateson 1964).

Learning I is not only about adding or increasing behaviours: it comprises habituation and forgetting, maybe the most common forms of learning, that allow people to select out irrelevant information and focus on what demands attention. Unlearning is a dimension of learning in these terms.

Bateson's theory focuses on the micro-level, but it shows how the proximal and larger context are involved in the creation/transformation of meaning (Learning II) and perspectives (Learning III). We have already introduced this in Chapter 2, when discussing Bauman's critique of deutero and tertiary learning (Levels II and III). Learning I can be achieved in different ways: a child can learn how to read by imitation, or under the menace of punishment, or pushed by the need to solve a problem, and these pedagogies can be implemented more or less intentionally by a rewarding or blaming adult, by a lovely grandparent, or tacitly through being close to an older sibling. The same action is to be learned, but within different contexts and relationships. A living being who is raised in a certain learning context will anticipate further contexts coherently in the light of experience.

> Experience of one or more contexts of the Pavlovian type results in the animal acting in some later context as though this, too, had the Pavlovian contingency pattern. Similarly, if past experience of instrumental sequences leads an animal to act in some later context as though expecting this also to be an instrumental context, we shall again say that Learning II has occurred. (Bateson 1964, p. 294)

Educators, psychiatrists, anthropologists, parents, among others, have to make assumptions about this level of learning, and these assumptions are detectable in their pedagogical choices, but not always understood as such. Education is not only about Learning I, it is also about Learning II. It enters in what Bateson calls 'building character', that varies in cultures, groups and families. The categories that we use to define people describe a system of relationships, not individual properties. A girl learns what 'a woman' is by coordinating her interactions with her environment. If she is 'daddy's sweet little doll', as in Ibsen's drama, such learning will shape future behaviour. We also learn to 'punctuate' interactions, or how to sequence and pattern relations of love, conflict, power, care, education, etc. ('no man is "resourceful" or "dependent" or "fatalistic" in a vacuum', Bateson 1964, p. 298). Bateson considers the psychoanalytic concepts of *transference* and *counter-transference* as another example of Learning II, reflecting our ability to interpret the relationship at hand using already existing frames of meaning (here again, early experiences have a pivotal role).

These examples show different kinds of self-validating processes that we use to interpret experience and consolidate it. Without this level of learning, no meaning can be developed. We need to trust our assumptions, if we want to be part of the human community (Ruesch and Bateson 1968). Learning II is 'almost ineradicable' (p. 301) in Bateson's view; it is deeply rooted in early infancy, unconscious but not necessarily repressed, in Freud's terms: it simply happens corporeally and builds *habits*. The structure of character is so deeply ingrained that occasional awareness of aspects of it is no guarantee of transformation.

> Subjectively we are aware of our 'dependency' but unable to say clearly *how* this pattern was constructed nor *what cues* were used in our creation of it. (Bateson 1964, p. 301, *italics are ours*)

It must be clear that, in Bateson's view, the context of learning is not 'out there', but embodied, inscribed in the learner's structure, stabilised or challenged in each new interaction. Among these, the interactions with others are especially relevant and constitutive: as with all mammals, we use communication for relational ends. Language has

biological roots, and non-verbal communication plays a crucial role in it. This opens new perspectives on learning, as an unconscious, embodied and interactive process (Formenti 2018). Bateson's unconscious is close to Freud's primary process, to the language of dream, play, art, and fantasy (1967). Our animal side is not separable from soul, but both are often missing from discourses of learning.

Learning III is a change in Learning II, and even more difficult and rare. It can be equated to Mezirow's transformative learning, but there is a difference between Bateson and Mezirow in terms of the interplay of and weight to be given to conscious and unconscious processes, as well as in the trust they put into the feasibility of 'real' change. Bateson is skeptical of learning based on conscious processes, since we are aware, at best, of a limited part of the whole system—a small arc of a larger circuit (see also Bateson 2016). Besides, our body/mind unit does not wait for us to be aware, to make its own adjustments. Awareness is slow, misleading, too linear, and too purposeful. In a word, anti-ecological. We too easily forget to listen to our body, perceptions, and emotions. His suggestion, then, is to ask the unconscious to illuminate the construction of our patterns of relationship, by playing with art, storytelling, and imagination as well as religion—this is abductive knowing involving thinking in stories (Bateson 1979). These represent resources of knowledge, mental health and hope.

Jack Mezirow (1991) was in fact inspired by Bateson's learning categories when developing his transformative theory of adult learning. In the first formulation of his theory, he identified four forms of learning: the first and second are very similar to Learning 0 and I, and do not transform the learner's perspectives of meaning:

1. Learning through existing frames of meaning, where perspectives are taken for granted, and
2. Learning of new frames of meaning, where perspectives are confirmed, or even reinforced (when new frames of meaning are added and integrated in old schemes, without challenging them).

The other two forms, defined by Mezirow as 'transformative', act on different levels, but their leverage is always a moment of awareness:

3. Learning by *transformation of the frames of meaning* (similarly to Learning II) is provoked by becoming aware of the inadequacy of previous frames, hence necessitating reflection on one's assumptions. The example given by Mezirow (1991) connects with Sofia's story: a woman, a mature student at university, rushes home every evening to prepare dinner for her husband; she realizes that her fellow women students at the university interpret these actions differently: is it care or submission? Free choice or obligation? So, she is brought to challenge stereotyped gender roles, a hidden frame of meaning until that moment. In 'A Doll's House', Nora's realisation of her own participation in the relational game evokes the slamming of a door. As I am now, I cannot be your wife: meaning and identity are strongly linked.

4. The *transformation of perspective* (very similar to Bateson's Learning III) entails a deeper challenge of previous structures. It is possible, after abandoning habitual dinner preparation, that the woman begins to question other behaviors that confirm a stereotyped identity; she might become aware, through critical thinking and reflection, about the assumptions that sustain a distorted and/or incomplete perspective: this is the most significant kind of emancipatory learning, since it drives deeper life change.

If we accept this idea, awareness would bring us to more flexible and open perspectives, and transformation might mean a stronger sense of self, a critical understanding of social relationships and cultural conditioning, and more functional actions, but is not always like that. If deeper assumptions are shaken, identity and meaning are threatened, people become confused. Double binds (Bateson 1972) are deeply disorientating, because they disrupt our trust in the possibility of meaning (Ruesch and Bateson 1968). In these cases, the unconscious takes over and pushes us to re-organize the whole personality, for better or worse, sometimes surrendering to the impossibility of new meaning. The person becomes 'another', as in psychosis, conversion, art, mysticism, or deep healing: these phenomena are cited by Bateson when speaking of Learning III. They are rare, as they should be, since they burn much energy. We tend to avoid the burden. This is also Bauman's concern, when he says that a life in forced tertiary learning is not viable (see Chapter 2).

So, transformation can involve the whole personality, the life philosophy of a person, bringing greater flexibility in the premises acquired by Learning II, 'a *freedom* from their bondage. […] But any freedom from the bondage of habit must also denote a profound redefinition of the self' (Bateson 1964, p. 304). There is no linear relationship between Learning II and III: Learning *about* Learning II is a leap that can lead to a dramatic limitation of the subject's capacity to learn, as well as an increase of it. There are different possible outcomes of such a re-organization. Learning III in our mature woman learner could bring depression or creativity (or both). At a certain point, maybe after a deep crisis, she could free herself from a narrative that 'she' is simply her existing habits and behaviour. She might realise that the issue is not 'simply' changing her ways of doing, or interpreting them. It could involve ceasing to make dinner, or re-negotiating rules with her husband. She could leave him too, like Ibsen's Nora: in a sense, this would be the simpler solution, a way to avoid the messiness of Learning III. Or partners might find a more creative and respectful way of staying together, improvising new scripts (Byng-Hall 1998), where *both* would need to become less predictable. The feeling of a coherent self (based on Western epistemology) is generated, if we follow Bateson, by Learning II, while Learning III would make the concept of 'self' less nodal, more fluid, in the punctuation of experience, as illuminated in Zen stories and Western mysticism. In this journey to transcendence and the pursuit of 'happier' relationships, we let go of ego, or self, in the narrow definition of the term. In her work with family therapists and educators, Laura has witnessed the transformative effects of dialogue, as couples learn from each other new ways of living, more respectful of each other's needs and differences.

What then is the role of awareness? For Bateson, the conscious/unconscious relationship is pivotal: that which we know best is that of which we are least conscious, as any artist or expert would confirm. So:

> […] the process of habit formation is a sinking of knowledge down to less conscious and more archaic levels. The unconscious contains not only the painful matters which consciousness prefers not to examine, but also many matters which are so familiar that we do not need to inspect them.

> Habit, therefore, is a major economy of conscious thought. (Bateson 1967, p. 141)

It is not possible, or even desirable, for economic and logical reasons, to achieve total awareness. Consciousness—knowing that we know—is problematic, as it is coupled with purpose. We can be aware, at each moment, of only a small arc of a larger circuit, selected by purposeful attention and systematic distortion. Awareness can be strongly misleading and anti-ecological. This is also why assumptions, the very matrix of our ideas, do not need to be challenged at every moment.

> *The cybernetic nature of self and the world tends to be imperceptible to consciousness* […] Our conscious sampling of data will not disclose whole circuits but only arcs of circuits, cut off from their matrix by our selective attention. (Bateson 1972, pp. 444–445)

How then can we trust ourselves, or the world when we must rely on conscious purpose to change situations that are intrinsically complex and entangled? Situations of which we are part? For example, when we intentionally try to push someone to a particular experience of learning, maybe to transform. When we try to achieve a change in our or others' behaviour, or relationships, it is likely that we do it with little understanding of the delicate system of interdependence that we disturb. No wisdom, no sensitivity towards the pattern which connects, but rather a narrow, linear view, based on purpose, and even arrogance, risks destroying a system. Then again, some systems need to change radically, perhaps, as with Nora: they become unsustainable.

A Relational Perspective and Learning in the Proximal System

Mind and nature, culture and biology, conscious and unconscious processes, are parts of one and the same process that is (human) life. Bateson was a biologist and an anthropologist: to survive, people need to find their own, if unstable, equilibrium, but they also need to

coordinate their actions, scripts, and worldviews with others. We strive all the time to answer implicit questions: 'Who am I for you? Who are you for me? What are we here for?' Communication is a way to answer these questions: level one (the content of our messages) is framed and signified by level two (relationship), and both may refer to larger contexts (Pearce 2005). Each action then, from preparing food, to walking in the woods, or making love with someone, is done in co-evolution and coordination with our natural and social world. Classes of actions, like conflict, taking risks, and taking care of someone, are based on Learning II: we learn what is 'conflict' or 'love' or 'trust'. We learn 'punctuations' (Keeney 1983) by sequencing and patterning relationships in specific ways.

A good example of relational learning is *schismogenesis* (Bateson 1972). Literally, it is the amplification of a difference between two or more participants, and a basic process in cultural evolution, since it produces and transforms relational patterns between subjects, groups, or nations. They can develop symmetry and/or complementarity; more often, a combination of the two. When symmetry is developed, the context is defined as antagonistic or cooperative: 'we' are in the same position (no matter if in war or love: it makes us similar). When complementarity is developed, we learn about domination and subjugation: the pattern defines who is 'up' and who is 'down' (no matter if achieved by control or care). These patterns and their possible combinations can be used to read intercultural as well as interpersonal relationships. Conflict and alliance, inclusion and exclusion, fundamentalism, stigma, scapegoating are phenomena where difference is amplified to become a huge divide and can lead to destruction and death of the whole system and its parts. Complementarity can heal symmetry, and inverted complementarity can re-equilibrate power structures.

Schismogenesis may also enter in the reciprocal construction of identity. Who am I, that I can love (or hate, or dominate) you? Who are you for me? To be a persecutor, you need a victim. To be a child, you need a parent. To have an enemy you need to behave as such. Our relational life is a game of interpersonal perception and construction (Laing et al. 1969). We need coordination within groups and larger systems: workplace, community, organizations, law. In recent decades,

immaterial legal entities, not persons, but conceived as such by the law, have increased in their number and power. This is an issue: can we 'coordinate', as single individuals with such corporate systems, or do we become like ants and bees, disposable? We will re-examine this question at the end of the chapter.

Another example of relational learning is *family scripts*: John Byng-Hall (1998) uses this theatrical metaphor, along with attachment theory and systemic family therapy, to illuminate how families learn to increase their sense of security, in order to take risks and improvise new patterns of relationships. Self-transformation within the family entails improvisation, as stated, where scripts can be established as well as transformed. This requires several re-enactions and stories to become fully embodied and triggered in automatic, unconscious ways. This is an example of Learning II, fixed by family rituals, myths, and legends. Scripts define what is expected of us: they prescribe action, while stories give an account and often fix the meaning. This explains why narrative therapies can fail, when they only attend to meaning and belief, with no grasp of action and interaction. Scripts are compelling, they seem to act upon us. Re-editing them (or 'transforming' them, we could say) is wiser than trying to change them too precipitously.

Byng-Hall uses the systemic interpretation of attachment created by the Lausanne team (Fivaz-Depeursinge and Corboz-Warnery 1999), to explain how relational scripts may be learned, enforced, and transmitted at a very early age. Babies participate in relationships from the very beginning and family life may be seen as a stage where diverse ways of relating are tried out. Transitional scripts are especially interesting: moved by desire and play, they allow experimentation and improvisation, if within certain limits. Family improvisation is collective learning: it can emerge from necessity, when old solutions do not work, but also from curiosity, or fun, when some member has a desire and feels safe about pursuing it. Healthy uncertainty and playfulness in family life need safe enough relationships, and the role of a family therapist, educator, or social pedagogue is to sustain improvisation and playfulness, by offering a safe space for the whole family. In Laura's experience, the leverage for family learning can be anxiety, for example when members do not know what to do or how others will respond. But a whole situation

may get stuck, be too familiar so people do not feel anxious enough to transform. In such cases, displacement can open new possibilities, by using art, play and fantasy, for example.

Byng-Hall rooted his theory of relational scripts in his own biographical experience with family legends and myths. He recognised the position of the professional within the system, resonating with the family in treatment and learning how his own action is affecting the therapeutic process. This is a good hint for adult and family educators: the observer is always part of the system, as we observe later on.

Family Learning

In her research with families and family educators, Laura has focused on how people *learn together by living together.* There is no other way to learn what it is to be a child, a parent, a lover, or a grandparent. It happens day to day: a slow, unperceived, continuous formation achieved by coordinating actions, feelings, stories, values within and with 'this family', a 'we' identity and a 'culture' of our own. In a study of family myths, for example, young women were asked to write about their birth (Formenti 2014b), an event that we cannot remember, at least consciously, so we must largely rely on what we are told. Storytelling about birth has the features of myth: it is received, repeated, relational, metaphorical, symbolic, incomplete, and not necessarily true.

Daniela, one of the participants in the above study, wrote about being 'fooled' by her mother, who had forced herself, the mother claimed, into a very uncomfortable position of breastfeeding the reluctant baby, Daniela, and then blamed the child for her back pains, over many years. If we read the text at the micro-level, Daniela gives voice to her sorrow and embarrassment, about something that was not her fault. However, reflexivity, activated by writing (Hunt 2013), helps build a distance from the received narrative, and through this a possible transformation begins. The text shows, at a meso-level, how the family myth, iterated on many occasions, crystallised the story of an isolated unsatisfied mother and a difficult child trapped in a complicated relationship. Blaming each other became a family script. But where is the rest of the

family? Why was this mother left so alone and desperate? For the story to transform, towards new possibility, the whole system has to be made more visible, and its scripts revisited. Daniela cannot afford to become a mother without some revision of the narrative.

Then, the macro-level should be considered: discourses about motherhood became, in the second part of the last century, increasingly heavy and demanding on women. A child's health, wellbeing, intelligence, and even happiness are expected to depend on the mother's competence. But mothers are left alone, lacking previous knowledge or good intergenerational models for childcare, while medical expertise and hospitalisation strips them of their agency and generative power. Daniela's mother wanted to breastfeed: this is what a good mother is expected to do (but when Laura was born, good mothers were expected to buy expensive powdered milk). But: did she *desire* this? The rhetoric of obligation impinges on mothers and creates anxieties that disturb early relationships. Perspective transformation, in such situations, would entail sustaining mothers and families in revealing such hidden processes alongside talking back to medical power, or the common-sense consensus. The more agentic mother, within a collaborating family, brings hope for the future.

Family learning is rooted in the body, in the material and psychic conditions of life, on one side, and the wider social and cultural context on the other. It connects the micro and the macro through very concrete interactions. Gender, class, roles, as well as care, love and hate are learned through trans-individual processes (Simondon 1989/2007; Combes 2012) where the individual and collective form and transform together, inseparably and interdependently. While the traditional grasp of biographies is based on the singular story, often isolated from the proximal context, in the systemic view a biography needs to be read in the context of relationships. So, parenthood is built with others: with your child, as in Daniela's story, who is also learning what it means to be the daughter of this mother, with this father, and with these grandparents, doctors, neighbours, friends, teachers. An ongoing process of multiple coordination—a *dance* of interactions, conversations, storytelling, and explanations—builds the dynamic system that is called (with some dangers of reification) 'the family'.

Dis-connection: An Epistemological Mistake

Bateson invites us to interpret our problems as rooted in epistemological presuppositions.

> I have studied the area of impact between very abstract and formal philosophic thought on the one hand and the natural history of man and other creatures on the other. This overlap between formal premises and actual behavior is, I assert, of quite dreadful importance today. We face a world which is threatened not only with disorganization of many kinds, but also with the destruction of its environment, and we, today, are still unable to think clearly about the relations between an organism and its environment. What sort of a thing is this, which we call 'organism plus environment'? (Bateson 1970, pp. 448–449)

This quotation is dramatically relevant, half a century later, after the irreversible changes that have happened to the earth's ecology. We bear witness to ecological catastrophe, war, terrorism, mass migration, increasing inequality and poverty, desperation, and ugliness worldwide. By using one word—*disorganisation*—to summarize all of this, Bateson was doing what he was good at, that is searching for 'the pattern which connects' (Bateson 1979) different phenomena, from cells to cities, from families to ecosystems. Systemic organisations do dis-organize, and necessarily so sometimes. To allow life, you need death. Bateson warned us of the end-linkage, that is when living beings are about to destroy the very system they depend on, hence killing themselves in the process. As dinosaurs may have done, sixty-five million years ago. By our insane epistemology, we are creating the conditions for the extinction of human life, if not the whole planet, every day, by polluting the spaces in which we live, our relationships, and minds. Ideas are very concrete things, they produce effects, out there and inside us. This is what education should take as a primary concern. How did we come to this point? What can we do about it? And what has this to do with transforming our perspectives? We may be preparing students, neo-liberally, for labour markets, or the seductions of consumption, rather than to be engaged, reflexive, sensitive, educated citizens.

In another famous quote, Bateson was addressing the regents of the University of California:

Break the pattern which connects the items of learning and you necessarily destroy all quality. (Bateson 1979, p. 8, italics in the original text)

The pattern which connects was his way to conceptualise knowledge, learning and communication as complex interrelated phenomena. Linear and disconnected presuppositions produce pathologies and shortcomings in our world, primarily,—it needs to be said—through education. His concern appears more urgent today, if we look at the fragmentation of disciplines and increasing specialisation, linearity, and problem solving. Students do their tests to receive a mark, then forget everything about the contents and go on to the next, disconnected topic, until they exit the system of education unable to make connections between contents and context, to interpret their lives, or to gain any sense of unity and meaning. What is knowing? The fragmentation of paradigms, theories and models, each claiming to be truth, so typical of solid modernity, is replaced by disconnected 'evidence', to which everybody should conform without asking in which context the evidence is valid. Problem solving is endemic: linear and narrow conscious purpose is the driver, until the next problem arrives, and mistakes accumulate. Even liquid modernity and disorientation, as well as the commodification of life, as illuminated earlier, are rooted in or exacerbated by a fractured epistemology.

Dis-connection is evident too in the construction of material and symbolic walls between communities. The separation of disciplines and professions, younger and older generations, social classes and groups, and the classification of humanity into 'us' and 'them', based on religion, ethnicity, ideology, paradigms, or whatever, builds closed communities that act like immune systems, creating their own understanding, language, and ways of doing. The need to define one's own 'field' nurtures defensive strategies vis-à-vis the stranger, who becomes an intruding body.

A satisfactory theory of adult education and learning must re-compose meaningful pictures, reflecting more adequately life as a whole,

drawing together plural perspectives to overcome dichotomy, the dominating logical principle of Western epistemology that 'destroys quality', Bateson warns us. By celebrating connections, we foster the creative, generative composition of ideas, stories, and levels of understanding. The 'ecology of mind' (Bateson 1972) is a call to recognize interdependence, not separation, as the key feature of living. If the 'unit of learning' is the whole formed by organism-plus-environment (Bateson 1972), any individual change depends on as well as provokes and sustains other changes in the larger system.

Difference, Outlines and the Limits of Human Perception

> *Information* consists of differences that make a difference. (Bateson 1979, p. 110)

We argued in Chapter 3 that perspectives are about perception. It is not only a metaphor. Following Bateson, a mind is any (living) system that creates and transforms differences by co-evolving with its environment. Difference is nowhere, in space and time. It is a 'nonsubstantial phenomenon' (Bateson 1979, p. 102) that needs 'a *receiver* (e.g., a sensory end organ)' (p. 106). Gradients in the structure of the environment are mirrored by gradients in the structure of the perceiver. So, only some differences make a difference for the living organism, be it a cell, plant, animal, or human being. The absence of gradients, an 'unchanging' or 'undifferentiated' object is not perceptible until we make a movement in relation to it, or act upon it. Bateson gave the example of touching a spot of chalk on a blackboard:

> My finger goes smoothly over the unchanged surface until I encounter the edge of the white spot. At that moment in time, there is a discontinuity, a step; and soon after, there is a reverse step as my finger leaves the spot behind. (Bateson 1979, p. 107)

This difference is not in the spot, nor in the blackboard. It is an 'idea', immaterial, free from time and space limits, it can endure long after (in

fact, we are still processing it). Here, Bateson quotes Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher: differences (*Tatsachen* = potential facts) in a piece of chalk are potentially infinite, but only a few of them become effective in the mental process. Seeing works similarly, gradients become visible when we move our eyes and heads; the image on the retina must constantly move in order for us to see. Borders are especially interesting: information concentrates in outlines, as every neurobiologist or ICT designer will know. Outlines, again, are not out there. We establish them, by drawing them. Spencer Brown and von Foerster arrived at the same conclusions, the former with his logical formal imperative 'Draw a distinction!' (Spencer Brown 1972, p. 3), the latter with the aesthetical imperative: 'If you desire to see, learn how to act' (Foerster 1973, p. 61).

In this regard, Bateson (1979, p. 27) loved to quote William Blake:

> *Wise men see outlines and therefore they draw them.*
> *Mad men see outlines and therefore they draw them.*

So, perception is an active process of knowledge building, but it is limited by habit (we are unable to perceive gradual change), thresholds (only some gradients are perceptible), attention (we select what to look at). Besides, notwithstanding the panoply of senses we have, and that enhance our adaptability, we use them in very narrow and impoverished ways. Moreover, perception, as in all our inner changes of state, is undetectable, beyond simple mantras about evidence. How can we enhance, then, the individual's capacity to perceive and to take responsibility for her/his perception—or lack of it? This is extremely important, if we think that the differences we construct are then coded, translated, and transformed to become ideas, and then composed with other ideas to make complex aggregates (punctuations, hypotheses, patterns, theories). There is no causal relation between any singular perception and the organism's response. Like, for example: 'After seeing this, he answered that'. It is not seeing, or hearing, but the meaning of what is seen and heard, and the meaning is embodied in the complex coding system of the perceiver. To grasp this meaning, we need to know the coding system, and how it was built. These arguments work in favor of auto/biographical studies, if we accept that previous experience structures the subject's systems of perception, classification, and management

of meaning. Perspectives are embodied as well as biographical and contextual.

If the body is the substratum of learning, perception and action are highly relevant for education, but they are undervalued in favour of verbal language and disembodied discourse.

After Bateson: The Contribution of Complexity

Bateson's ideas were developed further within complexity theory (Morin 1990, 1977/1992, 1999), which considered learning as an emergent feature of self-organizing systems. It is a range of different theories, indeed, with many nuances and ambiguities (Alhadeff-Jones 2008, 2010): systems theory, autopoiesis (Maturana and Varela 1973/1980), radical constructivism (von Glasersfeld 1984; Riegler 2012), second-order cybernetics (von Foerster 1974), among others. They developed at the intersections of different disciplines (biology, physics, cybernetics and computer science, communication, philosophy, logic, aesthetics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, family therapy, just to mention a few) as a transdisciplinary frame intended to devise more complex and respectful theories and practices in ecology, therapy, education, organisation, health, and so on. Laura learned about complexity from her initial work with the Milan School of family systems' therapy (Boscolo et al. 1987; Burbatti and Formenti 1988), before moving to adult education and social pedagogy.

Complexity can highlight, in fact, educational theory (Mason 2008; Jörg 2009), the organization of educational systems (Stacey 2005; Davis and Sumara 2006, 2008; Loorbach 2010; Snowden and Boone 2007), the implementation of educational reforms (Snyder 2013; Morrison 2010), and even the democratisation of adult education (Biesta 2006; Osberg and Biesta 2010), by building a more integrated theory of learning contexts (Edwards et al. 2009; Haggis 2009) and adult learning (Fenwick and Edwards 2013). It has also been explicitly connected to the theory of transformative learning (Alhadeff-Jones 2012; Nicolaïdes and Marsick 2016).

The perspective of complexity contains six valuable epistemic ideas (Alhadeff-Jones 2012):

- a tension between generality and singularity;
- circular causation of learning (since no linear, deterministic cause can explain it);
- *emergence* of a new property from a whole or process;
- multiplication of perspectives;
- interplay of autonomy and dependence; and
- the knower as an active builder of knowledge.

The latter is what complexity authors define as 'observing systems' (Foerster 1981). We will illustrate it by a film where the thesis of a detached researcher/observer is disproved.

As Observing Systems, We Are Compromised

Kitchen Stories (2003) is a Norwegian movie directed by Bent Hamer, which shows what happens when we try to objectively observe human behaviour. Folke, a young Swedish man, is sent to Norway by his employer (a company studying human behaviour for marketing reasons) to observe Isak, a lonely old Norwegian. He has to document the man's movements across his kitchen, by drawing and counting them on a map. The study is aimed at optimising kitchen furniture for male use, and it follows rigorous positivistic rules, to guarantee objectivity: hence, observer and the observed must not interact. 'Thou shall not interact!' How to respect this imperative, however, when two human beings live side by side in the same space? A tenet of the systemic approach is the impossibility of not communicating (Watzlawick et al. 1967).

The film shows how the differences between the two men—Norwegian/Swedish, observed/observer, old/young, poorly/highly educated—bring a clash of meanings in their relationship. Very soon, Isak, who had his own reasons to volunteer for the study (the promise of a horse), stops using the kitchen and makes a hole in the ceiling to spy on the young man. The observed becomes the observer. The story goes on, with several messages—differences that make a difference—that develop into a full relationship, with the construction of reciprocal

identities, scripts, and meanings. Then a third man enters in the story, and the plot thickens with emotions of conflict, love, alliances, tenderness, and violence, as happens in all human systems.

'Thou shall not interact!' is paradoxical, because it states a priori a way to interact, indeed. Laura frequently met this paradox in her work with professional educators and social pedagogues, who are told to take a 'neutral' and 'objective' perspective, for example when they assist in meetings between fostered children and their parents. The relational complexity of these encounters requires a more creative and compositional framework of understanding, and the awareness that the observer is a part of the system. This is the aim, for Laura, behind using participatory and cooperative methods with professionals and family members, as a form of intervention *and* research.

Reality is not 'out there'; but an ongoing construction (Watzlawick 1984). The objectivity/subjectivity dichotomy is replaced by circularity, of knower and known. 'Everything said is said by an observer […] everything said is said to an observer' (von Foerster 1974, p. 401), or better by/to an observer community, since 'observing takes place in languaging' (Maturana 1990, p. 102). Observing is made possible, indeed, by *languaging*: Maturana and Varela (1987/1992) use the verb to highlight the process of interaction/communication that sustains knowledge construction.

Languaging is beyond words or naming the world 'out there': it is a way of coordination, reciprocal orientation, and doing things together. Words, in their apparent denotative meaning ('naming') compel people to act in certain ways; they have a deeper connotative and performative significance. Hence, the value of our linguistic constructions (descriptions, stories, even theories) is not to be found in their *correspondence* to an independent, objective world, but in their *viability* in our world of experience (von Glasersfeld 1981). This is the basic tenet of radical constructivism: knowing is about selecting what maintains the knower's structure. Cognition is an ongoing structural drift (Maturana and Varela 1992) producing simultaneously the subject, the object, and their relationship.

As with Isak and Folke, we are observers of ourselves and others. Our observation is not neutral: we construct the world following (the

limits of) our perceptive structures and the assumptions they incorporate. Their meaning is co-constructed with our socio-material environment, webs of affiliations and previous conversations. Thus, our whole life-world is constantly *enacted* (Varela et al. 1991) in circular loops of co-evolution that form higher order units (Maturana 1990): families, teams, organisations, and larger social systems, each with their own internal consistency, identity, language, and mythologies. Each observer community feeds us with words, ideas, and actions. They connect, overlap, conflict, and influence each other, not least through ourselves. We are bridges between cultures. A child is a bridge between school and family, with all the issues this can raise. A worker is a link between employer, State, and the proximal system. To understand learning we need to grasp this complex, entangled dynamic. If a group, organisation or family are 'minds' of a more abstract quality, are they capable of learning and transforming in their own way? A theory of learning needs to understand how these systems influence, constrain or liberate learning of a more individual kind.

From Trivialization to Complex Education

There is a trend in education to treat complex systems as 'simple' or at best 'complicated' ones (Snyder 2013): input-output machines, which are expected to reproduce the same answer to the same question (like a dispenser), or entailing more refined technology and algorithms, 'imitating the complexity of life', hence 'capable of learning'. But they are still machines. Von Foerster (1993) calls them *trivial machines*, and *trivialisation* is the dreadful attitude of 'institutionalised pedagogy' designed to reduce human complexity and unpredictability, maybe to produce 'reliable' citizens. Linear pedagogy is driven by conscious purpose. At school and university, questions allow one 'right' answer, overlooking that 'wrong answers' are often the most interesting because they reveal much more of the learner's perspective. Tests, as Heinz von Foerster loved to say, get us nowhere (Foerster and Pörksen 2002).

Education is too frequently a means to trivialise others, by isolating and silencing them. A living system cannot be fully explained, or

controlled, without damaging its delicate equilibrium, since it will react to our attempts to control. When we construct the other as simple (or complicated), we do not care about her interpretation of the situation: we give instructions, we explain her behaviour as having 'causes', we expect repetition of previous answers and use our 'expert knowledge' to model and forecast 'results'. Complexity asks us to engage with the other, recognising that we are fully compromised, as parts of an ongoing process of mutual learning. We can only know a living system by engaging in interaction, hence creating a new system of a higher order, where our actions are interdependent. 'Structural coupling' is a form of co-evolutionary learning (Maturana and Varela 1987). From this, new information can *emerge*, unpredictably. 'The complex is the realm of the unknown unknowns. It is a space of constant flux and unpredictability. There are no right answers, only emergent behaviours' (Snyder 2013, p. 9).

The concept of *emergence* shifts education from a common sense view of instructing or modelling the other, based on the power of knowledge, to a 'disempowered' and 'unknowing' position, towards more of an invitation to dance, or play, and to create space for the emergence of multiple, embodied, conscious and unconscious perspectives: ones that foster conversations where learners can compose different perspectives in order to allow more ecological interpretations of the situation at hand, good enough to effectively act and keep the ecosystem alive. There is no guarantee of 'results', when we act in this way. Complexity theory recognizes and praises uncertainty in education:

> We should learn to navigate on a sea of uncertainties, sailing in and around islands of certainty. (Morin 1999, p. 3)

There is no 'possession' or 'increment' of knowledge, no accumulation of competence. The commonplace idea of learning as a good, stocked in our heads, leaves little place for the happening we can call living, where 'learning' is the word that describes an experience of becoming. An experience, to repeat, bearing implicit relational questions: Who am I (becoming) for you? Who are you (becoming) for me? What learning are we here for?

To Conclude

Can complexity theory inspire new ways to think and maybe favour more ecological processes in education? The pattern which connects fuels our curiosity for the system and irreverence for established perspectives (Cecchin et al. 1992); it invites us to compose different representations of learning, as social *and* individual, physical *and* symbolic, conscious *and* unconscious. All of which is entailed in auto/biographical and cooperative practices, or any method that enables us to grasp the interplay of material dimensions (bodies, spaces, objects), actions and perceptions, emotions, images and stories (symbolic, artistic, metaphoric languages), words and propositions, concepts and critical theories, values and statements of interest, and the embeddedness of all of these within a broader context (relational, cultural, social and ecological). The integration of all this is a theoretical and practical challenge for us all.

On a larger scale, in educational reforms (Snyder 2013), there needs to be better recognition of a myriad of actors, with different interests. Some are unheard and silenced. We need spaces for interaction and communication, to enhance participatory and dialogic learning, voicing and celebrating multiple perspectives, not least dissent. This brings us back to the roots of adult and popular education, which we meet in the next chapter of the pilgrimage. The amplification of differences needs to build on existing ideas and practices, on real needs and voices, if we are not to destroy earlier adaptation and its delicate ecologies. To celebrate the pattern connecting the individual, the proximal system, and the broader context, to foster more and better ecological changes, we have to develop knowledge, reflexivity, and creativity at all levels. Is this possible, in a rapidly changing and increasingly unjust world? Does adult education have any role? We wonder too how well we, Laura and Linden, are doing in identifying patterns that connect to help us live in uncertainty.

Learning new abilities and skills, or even learning to learn, through reflection and awareness, are not enough. As learners, we have to navigate among different meaning perspectives, in uncertain waters, and re-compose our dilemmas in viable ways. Education is urgently required

to sustain our ability to learn from different and conflicting views, to draw distinctions (von Foerster 1993), and to overcome disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow 1991; Taylor et al. 2012). And to fuel critical thinking, but not in a linear, polemical way; instead, we must foster collaborative conversations. And recognise that complexity is not comfortable; it opposes readymade solutions, inviting educators and researchers to challenge their own perspectives on education and learning.

In the chapter, the co-evolution of individuals and environment has been considered. Transformative learning theory is very Western in its individualistic grasp of learning, notwithstanding its claims about the importance of communication and the social. We have sought to develop a theory that 'minds' both body and context. We have argued that all living organisms learn, along with their living contexts, and at different levels, since they are made of interacting parts and are parts, themselves, of larger feedback circuits. But how can we face the increase, in our world, of those 'self-maximizing entities which, in law, have something like the status of "persons"—trusts, companies, political parties, unions, commercial and financial agencies, nations, and the like' (Bateson 1972, p. 446). Or: the increasingly immaterial system, the World Wide Web, the Algorithm? They are 'social bodies' without a body; 'these entities are precisely *not* persons and are not even aggregates of whole persons. They are aggregates of *parts* of persons' (idem).

And this is scaring, since these entities story us. When Sofia came to the university, she was expected to act and think 'narrowly within the specific purposes' of the academy, or better the *part* of the academic body that she represents, that is, being a student. In relation to these systems, we are personas, we lose contact with our whole perceptions and emotions. Is it possible for such an organisation to take decisions by processes that 'spring from wider and wiser parts of the mind' (idem), sensitive to the pattern which connects? Or will they unescapably reduce us to the status of 'a pure, uncorrected consciousness—a dehumanized creature' (idem)?

Adult education has the responsibility, wherever possible, to develop complex ideas and learning opportunities, that enable individuals to take a position within their communities, groups, and societies. Hence, conventional ideas and ways of doing based on separation, competition,

closed communities, and hyper-specialized languages have to be reconsidered. Following von Foerster (1981), to open new possibilities (an ethical imperative), we have to learn, first of all, that our perceptions depend on our action (an aesthetic imperative). If our desire is to see a less fragmented, and more equal, beautiful, peaceful, and viable world, we must learn to act in ways that are sensitive to the pattern which connects.

8

Popular Education and Democratization

What is the relationship between changing perspectives and social transformation? Is adult education still a democratizing force in our societies, and if so how? In this part of our pilgrimage we meet the idea of popular education and dialogue with some significant thinkers. It has represented a form of intentional and collective action, historically aimed at bringing about major changes in social and political contexts, beyond single lives. Popular education evolved in relationship with political, social and cultural change, and adapted to local contexts. Now, it is almost invisible in many societies, where the dominant perspective on learning is individualistic and narrowly instrumental. But how can complex, multicultural societies change in sustainable and ecologically sensitive ways, if citizens are treated as competing entities, shaped to be separate in a game that gets harder and more frenetic in liquid modernity? We have suggested throughout the book that any change in perspective needs new qualities of conversation and co-evolution with others, with the material/natural environment, and in a social context. Individuals are parts of interacting systems of families and institutions and must learn to adapt as well as challenge contexts. This involves them changing their (reciprocal) positioning and perspectives by talking

back to power, disrupting discourse, and refusing to accept their own (self) representation as passive, powerless, or incompetent. There is a very transgressive edge to social transformation.

This chapter has a strong auto/biographical flavour: we both are products of lost worlds, where popular education was a vital democratizing force and recognized as a practical and political necessity for progressive change. Not least in its power to challenge discourses and structures that limited freedom, justice, and the possibilities of creating more inclusive and better societies. We reflect now, historically and auto/biographically, on who and what shaped our different perspectives. We cannot offer, in limited space, a complete map of a phenomenon that found expression in diverse places and cultures, under the inspiration of the Enlightenment project, the stimulus of the French Revolution or religious movements. Popular education, for example, found vibrant expression in North America with the Antigonish movement and industrial renewal networks, in Black consciousness and in the women's movement (Brookfield and Holst 2011). Antigonish blended adult education, diverse forms of cooperation, financial assistance and community development in Canada's Maritime Provinces and beyond. It was designed to improve the economic and social circumstances of those who lived there. Priests and educators like Moses Coady inspired this from a base in the Department of Extension at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Their work produced credit unions while the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier has been involved in diverse community initiatives in 'developing' countries (Alexander 1997).

In southern Europe, the theory and practice of popular education was rooted in Catholicism as well as Marxism: churches and trade unions had a powerful role in its development. In northern Europe, especially the United Kingdom, the universities played a role in alliance with workers' organisations while workers themselves were often motivated by non-conformist religious conviction more so than Marxism (Goldman 1995; West 2016). Paulo Freire (1970) inspired popular education worldwide: he drew on Martin Buber and liberation theology (Kirkwood 2012) in developing his pedagogy of dialogue. Dialogue is a major tenet of popular education, but there are contradictions and

tensions here: in the danger of patronising people by claiming to have the truth, on their behalf; or where there is too strong an emphasis on words and cognition, especially in the case of women, indigenous peoples and minorities.

The history of the Twentieth Century contains several rich examples of education explicitly aimed at social transformation, albeit with different aims, targets or epistemologies. We can only explore some, mainly from our own countries and experience, and we are aware that this is a limitation. We also want to keep in mind questions about popular education's transformative role in a liquid modernity. The mantras of Europe as the 'knowledge society', with its rhetoric of adaptation, is a perspective in which citizenship, life skills, and inclusion tend to be about people fitting in to an established order. Of learning to be the good citizen by accepting particular values and priorities. Can education still build hope and justice, when constrained by funding policies and driven by calculations of economic return? If the dominant rhetoric is of education as 'investment' to make 'us' richer and stronger than 'others', can we build greater justice and democracy across the planet? Knowing is about liberating people from ignorance and sustaining their capacity to think, feel, to be critical and discriminating, and to fight for social justice. It is also about claiming dignity and building mutual recognition: so, we might need new, or reinvigorated forms of adult education beyond capitalism's human resource perspective.

The political is a crucial dimension of the human condition, marked by action and plurality (Arendt 1958): when we think of education as a form of human action we realize it is far from neutral. Every choice has effects: when education neglects the social, it depletes it, and human well-being in consequence. So an engaged education is a struggle for sustainability, the abolition of poverty, and for peaceful and more equitable coexistence. A perspective solely focused on technology, finance, the labour market or adaptability will not solve these problems or help us imagine better and sustainable ways of living together.

We want to learn from history, from critical reflection on theories and practices of education then and now, from the utopian ideas that inspired adult educators and intellectuals. We want to retrieve and dialogue about the meaning of 'oppression', as thematised by Paulo Freire

(1970), and of 'hegemony', a concept developed by Antonio Gramsci (1975/2007). These ideas retain a potency in countries ruled by brutal power, where education is not a citizen's right; but also in our so-called democratic countries, where common sense and consensus often constrain and imprison the mind, hearts and imaginations of 'silent majorities'.

It seems that mass schooling is unable, as promised, to guarantee that all citizens will grow to 'think like adults'. Jack Mezirow argued that 'the assumption in democratic societies is that an adult is able to understand the issues; will make rational choices as a socially responsible, autonomous agent; and, at least, sometimes, is free to act on them' (2012, p. 88). This assumption fails if people are not *treated* like adults and as potentially self-determining persons. Transformative learning needs transformative education. We must learn that our experience and knowledge count and can be used to talk back to power, in collective as well as individual ways. Moreover, we are never totally autonomous, and depend on others. As Freire argued, it depends on our awareness of the workings of oppressive patterns in our lives, including how language shapes us. Movement towards freedom, however defined, is as much social as individual; it requires concrete contexts of interaction to build awareness. And yet, awareness raising can result in greater inequality rather than emancipation (Wildemeersch 2018); in the emergence of new elites who know the truth, while the majority learn to follow.

Nowadays, the term popular education is almost abandoned in favour of the generic 'informal' education; or worse, blurring all differences under the banner of 'lifelong learning' (Zarifis and Gravani 2014). The latter, in its individualistic guises, can obliterate any concern for the marginalised, the poor, or undereducated, apart from for their economic utility. The dream of many, the *real* transformation of building a peaceful world of reciprocity and rights for everyone, and sustainable development to avoid destroying the planet, seems hopelessly elusive. We seek therefore to dialogue with the ideas and enterprise of engaged educators and scholars who dedicated their lives to such goals. They may have been utopian, but then we are mindful of the present dystopic, liquid modernity.

Collective Disorientating Dilemmas

Stephen Brookfield, writing about dystopias, and the collective and political aspects of transformative learning (Brookfield 2000; Brookfield and Holst 2011), applies Mezirow's idea of 'disorientating dilemmas' to wider economic, social and political dislocation, such as the 2008 financial crash. This brings transformative potential, if only we realise that an entire system is dysfunctional, and its frameworks of meaning must be changed (Brookfield and Holst 2011, pp. 32–33).

In fact, dislocation and disorientation are systemic features of our times, presenting themselves in the form of war, mass migration, terrorism and wider political crisis. They might be opportunities for new ways of seeing and being in the world. Why does this not happen, though? Brookfield (2000) considers the deep social origin of 'cognition', as a 'function' of the way societies work, and our positioning within them. He quotes Mezirow in developing the idea that our thoughts are often the products of our 'webs of affiliation'. So, 'our' cognition gets shaped by the structuring influences of class, race, gender, sexuality, family or religion and ideology. We exist in particular 'cultural streams' that appear natural and common sense; so, to understand collective disorientation we must shift the focus to, as it were, the souls of whole societies.

Gramsci (1975/2007) referred to 'hegemony' as the social transmission of values and ideas based on—and confirming—the interests of dominating groups (Mayo 1999). Common sense is infused by power, but nowadays it is no longer forced on people by dominant groups, as it was in Gramsci's time, and still is in totalitarian societies. It is a form of invisible oppression without an obvious oppressor. De-centralized global domination, ruled by finance, anonymous organisations, media, as Bauman observed, are obvious examples. Hegemony is so widespread that it becomes natural, and we naturally adhere to it. 'It's common sense, isn't it, for people to want to live among their own; too many immigrants cause too much trouble; well inequalities are just natural, aren't they? The migrants are stealing our jobs!', we might say. 'They' of course are not like 'us'. They might be strangers, asylum seekers, or women, or any 'other' social group.

Social transformation, then, is no bed of roses. When common sense is shaken by political, economic, and ecological turbulence, or war and terrorism, efforts are made to restore normality. To reaffirm the existing 'order', often out of fear and panic over something potentially worse. Scapegoating can be a consequence. Or giving renewed emphasis to security, control, surveillance, building walls, and creating myths and narratives to divide and separate. There are echoes here of processes at an inter and intra psychic level; of controls over what we think, of building walls between different parts of our personality, and of internalising demeaning myths directed at people like us. Neoliberal politicians use such methods, because they know they work among the 'silent majority', who have never adequately been encouraged to think, or act, like adults. The neoliberal dystopia infantilizes. Its leverage is the economy of automatic thinking, the commodity of letting others take decisions. Social transformation is a major challenge and some pessimism is understandable, not least in regard to the potential role of transformative adult education. Brookfield and Holst (2011, p. 102) quote Coady as saying that people are rarely able to see any bigger picture, or act, when they are on their own; but when they come together they are more likely to understand that their situations are not individual eccentricities or failures, but rooted in asymmetrical power relations, inequalities and constraining discourse.

Leaders, and Beyond: A (His) Story of Workers' Education

Popular education has had its advocates in every country. We will dialogue with leaders and, for us, inspiring figures. Raymond Williams and Richard Henry Tawney in the United Kingdom, Dolci, Capitini, and Manzi, among others, in Italy: brave and intelligent men, 'organic intellectuals' (Gramsci 1966), moved by the 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will'. They used their own will and power to make things happen. They employed every means—like the Italian Danilo Dolci in hunger striking, or Raymond Williams in his prolific literary

and critical output—to highlight the rights and celebrate the voices of people they loved, those often unseen and abandoned. This is a story, however, where other voices have been silenced and patronised: women, in the main, who were active in literacy courses, tutorial classes, factory councils, cultural centres, and who struggled to build better lives and communities. A (his) story of popular education must find better ways to chronicle gender, and the reciprocity and interdependence of women and men.

While preparing this chapter, Laura realised the innumerable autobiographical notes written by nearly illiterate working-class men and women, in the 1950s, as a mandatory part of their application to become members of PCI, the Italian Communist Party (Baroni 2008). She was struck by the thoughts of unknown thousands, in those years, learning to write and read, as a necessity both for a job and to enter political life. She remembered her aunt Gina, an unschooled housewife, who read the newspaper every morning at the kitchen table, commenting aloud to her as a little girl. Zio Nino, her husband, was a survivor of the Russian campaign and a local socialist activist. Years before, Gina's father (Laura's great-grandfather) had a leading role in a big strike of farm workers, fighting for their rights against the 'padrone' (the 'big father', the land-owner). Nonno Satiro, was her great grandfather, and he was in fact the only one in the village who could read and write. The liberating value of education is woven into these old family memories. Linden talks of how members of his family were autodidacts and dreamt of a better future through education. The history of popular education is partly about the history of people we have known, our parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, and their wider families, in which the autodidactic tradition was strong. When both men and women insisted on asking awkward questions and challenging received wisdom. They valued knowing, non-conformist religious ideas, or challenging patriarchal religion, alongside political awareness, and the right to vote, because these things made a difference in their own lives.

Workers' Education and the Struggle for Democratic Transformation: Richard Henry Tawney and Raymond Williams

The history of workers' education in the United Kingdom has an important place in Linden's research and writing (West 2016, 2017). Most recently, in the rise of racism and fundamentalism, he revisited his earlier historical work on twentieth century experiments in democratic transformative education. Jonathan Rose's (2001/2010) research on the history of popular education in the United Kingdom concluded that workers' education had a central role in social transformation, in the first part of the twentieth century. The establishment of a welfare state, and more egalitarian society, after the Second World War, was partly the outcome of the war itself because it served to stimulate progressive adult education among soldiers. The Welfare State followed, in many countries of Western Europe, bringing relative transformations in individual and collective lives: and some freedom, at least, from ignorance, insecurity and poverty. The point is that meaningful transformation depended on collective intellectual, democratic, imaginative, heartfelt and even spiritual effort, in which popular education had a central place.

There is a strong auto/biographical edge to our writing at this point. Workers' education in the United Kingdom, and the autodidactic tradition, was, as noted, alive in Linden's family; and deserves more respect than he once gave it (West 2016). A better and more inclusive health service was one aspect of a utopian educational dream. A National Health Service, free at the point of use, was established in 1947, as was the wider availability of subsidised public housing, which brought relief to families like Linden's. Having a home with an inside bathroom and a garden was a liberation. As was not having to pay to see a doctor when someone in the family was ill: this had deep meaning for members of his family. It was often too expensive to see the doctor before the War. The new public housing estate, on which his parents lived, was a glimpse of a New Jerusalem in its spaciousness, abundance of trees and gardens. New public housing, cleaner air, relatively secure employment and employment rights, alongside expanded educational opportunity

and the development of municipal resources like libraries, recreation centres, and adult education, served to transform the quality of the lives of the mass of the British population.

Tawney, Fraternity and the Idea of Social Transformation

Richard Henry Tawney was born into a privileged English upper middle-class family, while Raymond Williams was the son of a railway worker. Both, however, in their differing ways, thought of workers' education as a prime vehicle of social and cultural transformation. The influence of Christian socialist ideas was at work in North America too as well as in continental Europe: scholars and community-workers like Myles Horton were concerned with the relationship between Christianity and everyday life. Horton was involved with the Highlander Folk School. He studied at a theology seminary in New York, in the 1920s, and the movement he and others inspired paralleled the emergence of liberation theology and popular education in Latin America (Horton and Freire 1990).

Herein lay an idea of Christ socially incarnate, and of building the Kingdom of transformation on earth. It encompassed respect for the divine in the other, and of the importance of creating relationships of equality and fraternity. This ideal had a central place in the stories told about popular education in the United Kingdom. Workers' education like this was a 'ministry of enthusiasm', in the words of Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, the first ever President of the Workers' Educational Association. Temple was alluding to the early Christian church, of teaching as well as learning, in a spirit of fraternity, and his comparison would have been understood by many in the workers' education movement, schooled as they often were in non-conformist Christianity (West 2016).

Popular or workers' education represented, in its spirit of conviviality and cooperation, glimpses of transcendence, of the Kingdom, of the possibilities of transformation grounded in human beings living

and learning together, in fraternity, and in a spirit of truth seeking for a common good. Lawrence Goldman (2013) argues that we should look to the early Tawney and his work in adult education as a guide in our present malaise; rather than be preoccupied with Tawney's later Fabian socialism in which elites continued to hand down prescriptions from on high. We should remember too that workers' education in the UK was a distinctive alliance between progressive elements in universities and workers' organisations. It was characterised by a mix of Enlightenment idealism, the aspirations of democratic socialism and a quasi-religious commitment to serious study. It was as much a spiritual as a socio-cultural, political and educational movement. If God really was present in everyone—the Asylum seeker, the Jew, the beggar, the Muslim and women—it had profound and inclusive implications. The democratic workers educational group could represent transcendence in the immanent.

An Experiment in the City

Workers education, in the form of what were called tutorial classes, once thrived in Stoke, in the English Midlands, where Linden was born (West 2016). The first ever university/workers' tutorial class took place in 1908 when 30 or so worker students gathered together on Friday evenings, for 2 hours, over a period of years, with their tutor, Tawney. The classes were free from prescribed curricula and members were encouraged to explore issues in their working lives from the perspectives of history, politics, economics and literature. Fortnightly essays were required, and the standard of some of these was high (West 1972; Goldman 1995). There were no formal examinations or qualifications due to a desire to eliminate competition and vocationalism, as well as teaching to the test, from the classroom (West 1972; Rose 2010; West 2017).

The students were potters, miners, clerks, shop assistants and elementary school teachers, women as well as men (West 1972). Many came from non-conformist backgrounds, from families, in short, that encouraged them to think for themselves. The Marxist Social Democratic

Federation made up the nucleus of the first class. The Social Democratic Federation (SDF) was formed in 1883 under the leadership by Henry Hyndman, the son of a business man who became a journalist and political agitator (Macintyre 1980). The Federation was opposed to the British Liberal Party of the time, and its programme was progressive, calling for a 48-hour working week, the abolition of child labour, compulsory free secular education, equality for women and the nationalization of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

However, some SDF members held an extremely 'mechanical version of the materialist conception of history' in which the whole of human life 'was controlled by economic forces independent of human volition' (Macintyre 1980, p. 17). Education, politics and consciousness were epiphenomena of the techniques and relations of production. The students could be rigid in their economic doctrines (ibid.), and this played out in tutorial classes. We can observe Tawney's own struggles, and those of the students, to keep the dialogue going and the spirit of collaborative enquiry alive, when conflicting views clashed. Tawney thought transformation lay in people's spiritual life, in how they treated each other, as much as economics.

The Workers' Educational Association, WEA, through which the classes were organised, was founded on three core principles. First, opposition to revolutionary violence, a theme across much popular education. Second, no institution, however perfect in conception, could work effectively with individuals whose morality was inadequate—which sounds archaic, now, even Victorian in its evocation of hard work, clean living and dedication to the welfare of others. Third, where a sound morality was lacking, this could be forged in a community of scholars seeking truth and the common good (Dennis and Halsey 1988). There was an Aristotelian ideal at work, as well as Oxford idealism (Goldman 1995): of the fully developed person living in communities, building and sustaining virtue, in relationship—communities cultivating not self- but other-regardedness (Dennis and Halsey 1988). The Oxford idealists influencing Tawney were opposed to individualism, utilitarianism and social atomism and drew on German philosophers, especially Kant and Hegel, to assert that individuals best realise their potential, or are transformed, in the collective.

People were part of webs of social, political and cultural as well as economic relationships, from which they could never be divorced for analytic purposes.

However, Tawney understood (Goldman 1995, p. 160) that the same spirit of non-conformity driving some worker students could narrow viewpoints and bring a tendency to over-proselytise, making dialogue difficult. Dogmatism and even fundamentalism of a Marxist, free market or religious kind, existed in the classes. But many of these worker students admired tutors like Tawney who remained steadfast as well as respectful when harangued by a fundamentalist. Leftist fundamentalists, sometimes from the Social Democratic Federation and later the Communist Party, (as well as free market ideologues), would quote texts like *Das Capital* with religious fervour. One student recalled a Marxist member—the SDF could dominate the first tutorial classes—challenging Tawney point by point and referring to classic Marxist texts. Tawney took it in his stride but insisted that there were other points of view. The student accused the tutor of hopping around like a bird, from twig to twig, and bad temper pervaded the room. But Tawney insisted that everyone, including his challenger, take tea together afterwards and tell stories, read poetry and sing songs. A shared humanity and a spirit of fraternity and conviviality were restored (Rose 2010, p. 266). The class in fact stayed together despite the local secretary of the SDF demanding that his members withdraw for fear of ideological contamination (Goldman 2013). We can detect something of the spirit of a genuinely transformative social education here: of remaining open to others and otherness, despite the strength of our own beliefs. There is a fine line to be drawn between a passionate desire to change a world, and being open to others and otherness, and to the possibility that we might be wrong. The divine, after all, was present, in each one of us, and could be speaking through the person sitting opposite.

In the 1960s, Tawney's Christian socialism was often derided as pious by mainly Marxist critical sociologists and historians. The tradition was considered paternalistic and even accused of constraining radical proletarian energies, and thus the possibility

of more fundamental transformations of capitalism (see West 2016, 2017). Notwithstanding, Tawney's contribution to theorising the role and practice of socially transformative education is now positively re-evaluated by several scholars, in the light of the earlier critiques (Holford 2015; Goldman 2013). The tutorial classes sought to make university education available to everyone, in their own localities: very different to today's meritocratic assumptions about higher education for individual social mobility. Tawney was committed to a liberal and humane view of education, for everyone; individuals and communities should not be privileged or discounted because of their wealth or poverty. Moreover, Tawney represents a 'constructivist' pedagogy: classes were not lectures, and ideas were explored and developed in discussion; students engaged in research through using original source material, like historical documents, rather than simply relying on secondary texts.

Linden's views have changed towards the above. There is convincing evidence in his own research of the powerful spirit of the tutorial class students and their motivation to create a wider workers' education/cultural movement across the mining communities of North Staffordshire. He chose to ignore or minimalise this and to dismiss the role of non-conformity in a modish, quasi-Marxist scepticism (West 1972, 2016, 2017). We can now, in fact, form a highly nuanced, interdisciplinary understanding of processes of dialogue, and self/other recognition as well as transformation in these classes, drawing on the testimony of students themselves. Of how they describe learning as cultivating a democratic and fraternal sensibility (West 1996; Rose 2010, pp. 274–275). Human flourishing requires in fact sufficient experience of what Honneth (2007, 2009) calls self-recognition: of love and experience of self-other affirmation, at different levels. It includes recognition from significant others, like Tawney, and more experienced students. When we feel recognised, in good enough ways, in intimate relationships and valued groups, like the tutorial classes, and when we are considered as making important and wider social contributions, we are better able to recognize others, from which stronger social solidarities and transformation can flow.

Raymond Williams, Building a Common Culture of Transformed Meanings

Williams was of the same broad tradition as Tawney, although of a later generation and with a somewhat different political outlook. As a humanistic Marxist, notions of human agency, equality and cultural creativity were central to his ideas about democratic transformation. He understood that the WEA's historic mission was far from over by the 1950s, when he was active. If 'exceptional minds' from diverse backgrounds went to university more easily, wrote Williams in a letter to WEA tutors, the remaining question was what about everyone else? Were they simply to be treated as rejects, suitable only for narrow vocational training? The WEA stood for something that even educational reformers tended to forget, obsessed as they might be with schooling: 'It stands for an educated democracy, not for a newly mobile and more varied élite', wrote Williams in 1961 (cited in Goldman 1995, p. 252). Like Tawney, he was critical of people who presumed to deliver answers, or monologues, using ideological texts to shape minds and actions, without fostering any active or critical engagement. In contemporary societies, powerful forces act to persuade us to confirm the social order. He was critical of the advertising industry and the reduction of people to masses, to 'demographic profiles' and even of elitist tendencies in 'liberatory' popular movements, among those who claimed to have the answers. Transformation of any kind was not to be delivered from on high.

Williams wrote of 'culture as ordinary' (Williams 1989), and observed that various elites—whether advertising men and women or the authoritarian left—hold de-humanised and reductive views of the masses. Manipulation rather than education preoccupied them. Expensively educated people were 'now in the service of the most brazen money-grabbing exploitation of the inexperience of ordinary people' (Williams 1989, p. 6). 'The new cheapjack is in offices with contemporary *décor*, using scraps of linguistics, psychology, and sociology to influence what he thinks of as the mass mind' (Williams 1989, p. 7). His scorn was also directed at those Marxists who insisted that people must

think in prescribed ways. 'It is stupid and arrogant to suppose that any of these meanings (within cultures) can in any way be prescribed: they are made by living people, made and remade, in ways that we cannot know in advance' (1989, p. 9).

The Marxist interpretation of culture, he argued, was unacceptable if it retained a directive element: that if you desired socialism, you must learn to write, think, and learn in determined ways (Williams 1989, p. 8). Williams, like Tawney, was critical of militaristic metaphors and the fetish of violent 'solutions' among some on the left. When power is monopolised by unresponsive elites, divisions can constantly open among those who seek to oppose them: some will find violence attractive. Metaphors of assaulting citadels, he observed, are the wrong kind of transformational metaphor. The struggle needed to be slow, democratic, non-violent and fundamentally educational. 'Active reception', Williams suggested, was a living response that real communication elicited, in adult education, as in life, which depended on creating 'a community of experience, of human and intellectual equality'. Adult education was 'a crucial experience', a central way of getting in touch with ourselves and others in new ways, cultivating a collaborative conscientization (McIlroy 1993, p. 6).

Williams focused on ordinary everyday lives, within a never complete, long revolution. Of how women's lives, for instance, had been transformed by industrial and technological change. The washing machine and vacuum cleaner were to be celebrated. Of course, this may smack of a highly gendered view: of women being left to do the housework, as Laura has observed. A horrible view, she remarked, as we drafted the chapter. But liberation from certain kinds of domestic tyranny—of never having time—brought space for some to engage in popular women's education.

Williams continues to inspire various popular educators in the Philosophy in Pubs movement and other initiatives (West 2016). There is a growing awareness too, if still limited, of the role many women played in popular education, including in bodies like the WEA, over the course of the twentieth century (Roberts 2003). Linden's recent work on Stoke-on-Trent, and problems of racism and Islamism, encompasses various new initiatives in women's popular education, including

working class white and Muslim women learning together in health programmes that can lead to social action, using digital media. This is a response to the threatened closure of community resources like swimming baths, in the politics of austerity (West 2016). Popular education, however fragile, can still inspire movements of social transformation and more fulsome recognition of the other.

Freire, and Dialogic Transformative Action: Two Case Studies and Feminist Critiques

Movements for popular education have also been inspired by the work of Paulo Freire, in the United Kingdom, in Europe more widely, and in North as well as South America. His theory and practice of education (see a review in Lucio-Villegas 2018) brought social transformation to the forefront of adult education worldwide; his philosophy was rooted in both classical scholars such as Plato, and in modern Marxist anti-colonialist thinkers as well as liberation theology. Linden first engaged with Freire's ideas in an urban project located in Edinburgh, led by Colin and Gerri Kirkwood (2013). There is more on this below.

In many ways, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) can be read as a dialogue with Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Fanon emphasized the importance of providing oppressed populations with new and modern education (rather than traditional), but also with anti-colonial perspectives that transcend the culture of the coloniser. Freire sought transformation beyond the oppressor and oppressed binary, looking towards Hegel for a new kind of synthesis. Education should allow the oppressed to regain their sense of humanity, as a basis for changing their condition. It requires 'critical literacy', a basic skill of reading 'the world' besides and through 'the word'. The oppressed play a fundamental role in their own liberation, in new qualities of relationship. No truly transformative pedagogy could treat the oppressed as unfortunates who must be filled with specific knowledge. Ordinary people will find their own examples in struggles for redemption; likewise, if true liberation is to occur, those who authentically commit themselves

to the people must re-examine themselves constantly, as Colin and Gerri Kirkwood have done.

Colin Kirkwood (2012) notes that Freire's view is essentially inter-personal, as opposed to a Lockean view of self as an isolate. The way students are taught and what they are taught serves a political agenda. Teachers, themselves, have political notions they bring to the classroom. Teaching and learning, then, are political acts and teachers and students must be aware of the 'politics' that surround education, which is a central tenet of critical pedagogy.

Colin and Gerri Kirkwood project in Gorgy/Dalry a working-class district of Edinburgh, was a living embodiment of Freire's ideas (Kirkwood 2012). The Adult Learning Project (ALP) involved local people in a process whereby they identified significant situations and concerns in their lives, codified these in visual, auditory or written form, or in combination, and then decoded meanings and established themes for longer term study, working with experts, and using dialogical methods. Issues of children's play and wanting to write better, as well as the wider quality of life in the area, came to the fore, alongside questions of Scottish identity and English colonisation. Kirkwood (2012, p. 167) regards Freire as being 'literally fundamental to the life of ALP', but in ways that were adapted to an urban Scottish city. Transformation involved dedication and creativity, over many years. It is interesting that Kirkwood's (2012) interpretation offers a clear link between social and personal transformation in his ideas about persons in relationship. He draws on Scottish psychoanalytic traditions to emphasise how we are born in relationships, and that the personal is in such terms deeply relational. Kirkwood (2017) also confirms that Freire was influenced by liberation theology and the struggle to make the Kingdom incarnate through good enough, loving human relationships here on earth. Such religious influences have been downplayed by some radical popular educators and readers of Freire's work.

Freire has inspired popular education movements and experiences everywhere in the world (Kirkwood 2012), including the Centre for Research on the Education of Adults (CREA) in Barcelona, Spain, influenced by Habermas as well as Freire. Here too a dialogical approach and radical practices were developed enabling historical,

cultural and political change (Merrill 2003). By collaboratively engaging with people in a working-class area of Barcelona, the Centre brought local residents to establish an adult education school and cultural centre within an occupied building, along with other services, all run in non-hierarchical ways. The participants' relationships with the local council changed significantly, over time. The council initially refused them access to the buildings, but then changed its mind. Here, again, the political context matters. The post-Franco era in Spain created a dynamic of debate, demands and hope. Local groups and associations were formed, in which people could share knowledge and learning for a democratic purpose; a place where people dared to dream collaboratively. It would be interesting to return to the project today, in the light of the turbulent politics of Catalonia, and how accusations of Spanish colonialism have nurtured a narrative of 'us' against 'them', on all sides, fuelled by the violent reaction of the central government. How can the collective dream of dialogue, reciprocal understanding and peace be maintained in such a context?

Kirkwood (2012) talks of the challenge to Freirean ideas by feminist scholars, around the issue of gendered identities. Tracy Essoglou and Angel Shaw (Essoglou 1991) offer a critical understanding of Freire's idea of dialogue (1973), as possible and desirable, but not necessarily viable. Freire defines dialogue as 'the loving encounter of people, who, mediated by the world, 'proclaim' that world. They transform the world and in transforming it, humanise it for all people. This encounter in love cannot be an encounter of irreconcilables' (1987, p. 115; quoted by Essoglou 1991). The feminist exploration of subjectivity, however, considers uncertainty, silencing, and negation as inherent in dialogue, and not only forms of anti-dialogue. Since language and 'naming' are not neutral, but potentially colonizing, silence can be a way to free oneself from the Master's language. Freire also had focused on the tension between certainty and uncertainty: 'The world is not made up of certainties. Even if it were, we would never know if something was really certain. The world is made up of the tension between the certain and the uncertain' (1987, p. 58; quoted by Essoglou 1991). But in his view 'magical thinking' had to be put aside, as well as messiness.

So, if his ideas seem close to a 'feminine' sensibility and relationality, and he recognizes in women and peasants a common bond with nature and the relational, he does not fully recognize their connection to messiness, to the unspeakable, as 'the place from which each woman attempts to speak her language. Such speaking remains uncomfortably in the master's language, even in dialogue, often making it more difficult to practice dialogue critically' (Essoglou 1991, p. 12). It may also be the case that Freire privileges rationality in his work on conscientization: it is juxtaposed against 'magical' or primitive modes of relating to the world. But the primitive, including respect for the earth, and a spiritual quality in all things, is not to be dismissed in such peremptory ways. The privileging of rationality, and the neglect of other ways of knowing, may itself be a form of colonialism. So, Freire's work contains dualities to be challenged: around subject and object, speech versus silence, and perhaps rationality against (or controlling) emotionality. These dualities fail to do justice to the complex struggles of women, indigenous people, or any identifiable 'other'. All of us, in fact, when positioned as 'the other' and pushed to speak a master's language, may find life and meaning in different ways of knowing, beyond and beside that language.

Italy, the 'Two Churches' and a Peaceful Popular Education

There are many ways to tell the story of popular education in Italy; Laura's narrative focuses on a pattern of polarisation, contradiction, and dilemmas which connect politics, culture and education. Namely, the hegemony of institutional power in popular education, with the two so-called 'churches', i.e. the Catholic and the Communist Party, both fuelling and hampering democracy and the role of education in social transformation. Marginal voices of nonviolent educators and feminists have also been loud and effective at particular times, and still inspire through their prophetic power. But they were insufficient in sustaining a wider and durable culture of democratic transformative education.

So, now we will dialogue with inspirational people like Gramsci and diverse women, on what can be learned from their experience.

Gramsci, a humanist Marxist, a deputy and co-founder of the Communist Party in Italy, is recognized worldwide as an influential intellectual and political philosopher, and a precursor of popular education. While imprisoned by the Fascist government, he wrote the Prison Notebooks (Gramsci 1975/2007), an open, fragmented, incomplete text, as well as ongoing dialogue (not least with himself) that marked a transition in his life and thinking; from active politics to a critique of politics and building a clearer pedagogical perspective (Fernández Buey 2001). This happened at a time when he was 'the subaltern', disempowered, at risk for his life and 'uncertain as to whether his work would ever be read' (Almeida Rodriguez 2010, p. 12).

In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci assigns a central political and cultural role to the working class, as one of the most important transforming forces in society. He also claims a political role for 'organic' intellectuals, those who are aware of the need to engage with people's struggles:

> There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: homo faber cannot be separated from homo sapiens. Each man, finally, outside his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a 'philosopher,' an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought. (Gramsci 2005, p. 51)

Organic intellectuals exert their pedagogical function when engaging in real relationships in public spaces: in the party, works councils, and cultural centres. Gramsci claims the necessity of a classical education and criticizes the split, in the left, between technical/vocational training and the humanistic tradition. People must learn how to deal with complex knowledge, combining 'new' proletarian knowledge with the traditional historical and cultural knowledge of dominant classes. While considering work councils as ideal places for reciprocal education, sustained by

informal relationships, Gramsci continued to attribute a relevant peda-gogical role to vertical organisations—the party and union—as 'agents of liberation'.

After the Second World War, popular education was a necessity for the country, for the whole of Europe, in fact, to fight illiteracy as well as to build participation, democracy and trust, with the help of 'organic' intellectuals, inspired by Marxism and Catholicism. Those, that is, who were committed to the struggles of antifascism, and for justice and peace. However, the 'two churches' often acted in ways suffocating critical voices. Their strong vertical organization, ideol-ogy and power relationships reproduced elitism and exclusion, not least for women. They had participated in the Resistance Movement against fascism and were involved in the moral reconstruction of the country, but were marginalized and unrecognized in terms of their own needs. During Fascism, women's 'permanent duty was to bear the nation's children' (de Grazia 1992, p. 72). Brainwashing mass 'operations' were used to reinforce a traditional Italian patriarchy and to discipline women's bodies, as 'the main instrument to achieve the Fascist dream of a new Italian nation' (Malagreca 2006, p. 75). Post-fascist patriarchy was likewise based on deeply entrenched gender roles and the idealization of motherhood, which continued to exclude women from political life and work. This, despite the foundation, in 1944, of two associations of women: The Union of Italian Women, a hybrid coalition of militant communists, socialists, grass-roots Catholics; and the Italian Feminine Centre, aligned with the Catholic Church. They worked within civil society for the devel-opment of democracy through literacy, the women's vote[1] and civil rights, to enhance women's responsible citizenship, and new gender models (Passerini 1996). However, their very existence embodies the split within Italian society, whereby each church tried to 'educate' people in its own credo, enforcing their hegemony by ideological and concrete means.

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[1]Women's suffrage was proclaimed in 1945, and the first vote on June 2, 1946, to choose between a monarchy and a republic.

Danilo Dolci and Aldo Capitini; the Utopian Dream of a New Society

An inspiring figure, for Laura, was Danilo Dolci (1955, 1960, 1965, 1968), named the 'Gandhi of Sicily' because of his belief in nonviolent methods in the struggle to create better life conditions for the hungry and invisible people. A proto-Christian idealist, he dedicated his life to implementing collective action and education for justice, freedom and peace. He bravely fought the Big Powers, such as the Mafia, corrupt politicians, and even the State, that imprisoned him for 'occupation of public land', when he organized workers themselves to repair the ruined roads of their town as a form of protest. Winner of the Lenin Peace Prize (despite not being a communist) and twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, he received support from many intellectuals: Ernst Bloch, Erich Fromm, Aldous Huxley, Carlo Levi, Jean Piaget, Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, Leonardo Sciascia, among others.

Dolci's *dialogic pedagogy* was based on 'reciprocal maieutic', as in Socrates' practice of 'giving birth' to truth by conversation (maieutic is the art of midwives). Truth can only emerge from the meeting of different perspectives; hence it requires weaving together many voices. Education, as communication, is always bidirectional, or even pluri-directional. At each moment, it entails giving and receiving, asking and answering; hence, education is the work of a group, any group, where each person becomes a midwife to the others' ideas. We educate each other, reciprocally, unceasingly, in our relationships. Dolci reinterpreted power positively as the outcome and process of acting together, dialogically, while it can degenerate into domination and violence, when the desires of a few are achieved to the detriment of the many.

In education, the transmission of knowledge can itself be a form of violence, an abuse of power. He wrote, 'It is not true that people do not understand, would not understand. Instead, it is true that people are grown with many invisible as well as monstrously robust blinkers, so as to prevent them facing their problems' (Dolci 1993, p. 144, *Laura's translation*). Thus, to transform a society based on domination and transmission, he claimed, the best thing to do was to create and sustain

dialogic spaces for people to meet, discuss common problems, become aware of their situation, and begin to act collectively to transform relationships and context. Education is an open-air laboratory, where planning can be based on open research among people about their needs and desires, and the 'concretization' of dreams (from the Latin *cum crescere* that means 'growing together').

Dolci was moved by curiosity and wonder, by the desire of knowing the other, by respect for diversity, and an openness to change. His relationship with nature was intimate, as it was for the fishermen, peasants, and field hands that he worked with, and whose culture he respected as sacred. His book *Report from Palermo* (1959) is an example of a sociological imagination, where statistics are only used as background to the lively representations of people's voices and lives, primarily aimed at raising political awareness of the terrible conditions in which people lived. Besides being an activist, sociologist, pedagogue, and anthropologist, Dolci was a poet, capable of touching hearts and making the invisible visible (Dolci 1974). His most quoted verses are the poetic expression of his pedagogical manifesto:

> *Each one grows only if dreamt of*
> *There's some who teach others as horses, step by step.*
> *Maybe some feel satisfied, driven like this.*
>
> *There's some who teach by praising what they find good and entertaining.*
> *There's some as well who feel satisfied, being encouraged.*
>
> *There's also some who educate without hiding the absurd in the world*
> *Open to any development,*
> *Trying to be frank to the other as to oneself, dreaming of others as they are not now.*
>
> *Each one grows only if dreamt of.* [*Laura's translation*]

Aldo Capitini (1967, 1968) was another visionary, trusting in nonviolence and bottom-up processes as transformative forces. A socialist and anti-fascist, after the Resistance he undertook a deep de-mystification of any method using violence to 'transform' society and 'liberate' the oppressed. Violence merely reverses power—the dominated becoming

the dominant—not challenging this fundamental problem. After dictatorship and civil war, relationships were torn apart, not least between citizens and institutions; Capitini saw the defects of democracy—what he called the 'tyranny of majority'—and asked who are 'the people'? How can minorities achieve relevant power? He answered by creating adult education centres, with weekly open assemblies where any issue could be debated, from everyday problems to cultural, political, philosophical, and religious topics. This would have nurtured, as he saw it, the elaboration of a new culture of shared values and truer politics that is not the administration of power, but the common construction of ethics through the free exchange of ideas.

Capitini was especially critical of institutionalization, and the manipulation of consent. He saw the 'two churches' as dominating and suffocating structures with their bureaucracy and hierarchy, both at fault for using force, war and violence. He exhorted them to recognize nonviolent roots both in Marx's antimilitarism and in Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Dissatisfied by reformism (leaving 'man' as he is) as well as authoritarianism (confirming the old overpowering 'man'), he disclaimed what he saw as institutional 'closure', in favour of open and participatory processes.

His 'prophetic' and 'open' pedagogy (Capitini 1968) acts at the edge of betterment: the teacher who can see and trust the other's capacity to go further, beyond the present, is acting for freedom. However, he argued, Maria Montessori's and similar educators' idea of 'liberation' is overly individualistic and cognitive; it misses 'the unconscious creative zone from which the cohesive society springs, that is coexistence of everyone from which the unity of love comes' (Capitini 1955, p. 4, *Laura's translation*). So, while respecting Gramsci's ideas, he criticizes socialist pedagogy for its materialism that excludes the spiritual dimension. This material/spiritual dualism is a perpetual theme in our book and will be a central topic in Chapter 10.

Coexistence is a keyword for Capitini: to achieve the democratic ideal, each citizen must be aware of being part of a larger system, that can confer responsibility and dignity. It needs our joint participation in the world, beyond our existing webs of affiliation, beyond the human species, and even beyond the living, so as to comprise history, culture, and

nature, and the spiritual heritage conveyed by individual and collective memory.

> I also see man's inner participation to the creative coexistence of all, hence the development of coexistence contributes to his liberation. (Capitini 1968, pp. 129–130, *Laura's translation*)

Capitini was also the initiator of the Peace March in Assisi (in 1961, and still happening today): a symbolic and literal event where many people, from different directions and creeds, walk side by side over many kilometers, sacrificing their ego-centrism, to reach the birthplace of Saint Francis, a prophet of nonviolence. A dynamic, embodied, inclusive way to sensitise, build reflection, and to co-educate. This modern pilgrimage reinterprets a practice of transformation that was and still is common to many cultures and religions: a symbol of transcendence, beyond the individual/collective dualism, as we argue in Chapter 10. Our book, as stated from the outset, is a pilgrimage, and a potential symbol of dialogical transcendence.

Social Transformation in the Seventies: The 150-Hours Scheme and Movements

My own understanding (Laura) of 'popular education' was biographically shaped: as a four-year-old child, of relatively uneducated parents, I learned to write and read by watching television—the famous broadcast *'Non è mai troppo tardi'* (It's never too late) hosted by Alberto Manzi. He was a visionary educator and innovative pedagogue whose programme ran from 1959 to 1968 and became a national experiment in mass education for literacy. It worked! I will tell the story, in the next chapter, of learning to draw among groups of adults, at courses organized by the local Mutual Society, where many kinds of technical skills were taught.

In the Seventies, I entered a mixed group of workers and students who founded a free radio station, to celebrate their quest for free information, new music, and alternative lifestyles. And later, during the

university years, I profited from several 'informal' activities jointly organized by students and teachers, often in collaboration with political groups. At the time when credits did not exist, open events and seminars, with no exams, attracted several followers. My ideas of freedom, creativity, respect, conflict, agency, and the values that must be learned for social transformation, are rooted in those experiences. They were not learned in institutional courses. Formal education is not, for me, any guarantor of democracy.

In Italy, as in many parts of Europe, the cultural and political transformations of the Seventies pushed popular education towards more institutionalised and, paradoxically, more informal, bottom-up learning. The need of education among the working class became increasingly recognised and organised, through a process that found its apex in 1973, with the 150-Hours Scheme. The meaning and effects of this measure changed in time, with the increasing and then decreasing power of workers' unions (Lumley 1990); and the birth of new social 'movements' such as feminism, the New Left as well as later the Extreme Left, Autonomia, and its idealisation of terrorism.

The story of such movements begins in the so called Hot Autumn of 1969 which forced the State to begin reforms called for from the end of the Second World War. Mass strikes and protests were organized, debated and discussed in assemblies and study groups: hence, informal learning was a central aspect of these movements, where the process of reification of a 'working class' identity and culture left room (at least for a while) for the establishment of richer and creative, if more fragmented, identities and subjectivities. For the first time, in fact, diverse social groups—workers, tenants, women, migrants, students, and intellectuals—converged to imagine a project for a new society. They used strategies of social conflict and protest, for example with self-organised action in schools and further education, in housing estates, prisons, and factories. They profited from the cultural/educational work of unions and political parties in previous decades, but they educated people, implicitly and informally, to go beyond the worker identity. A larger sense of popular solidarity was nurtured in that period, not least by identifying new 'enemies': the establishment and the State. The unions were ambivalent: if protests meant more bargaining power, it was fine.

But student agitators, southerners and especially women were 'unexpected subjects' (Bono and Kemp 1991): they did not belong in traditional working-class organizations. They played with difference, refusal, and revolt.

The 150-Hours scheme (paid study leave of 150 hours a year) was established to enable workers to gain a certificate (around 80% of engineering workers did not have any), which affected their promotion. But it also gave expression to the 'positive utopias' of the 1960s, with innovative pedagogies, curricula, and assessment methods (State examiners, for example, accepted collective assessment, as a rule). The scheme was not geared to the needs of industry, or run by the State, as was the case in France (Lumley 1990), but it fitted the needs and culture of the working class, born from factory militancy. A booklet of those years stated:

> 'The use of the 150-hours courses is of great importance since it will involve a large number of workers in implementing this contract, allowing a mass growth in the cultural and political knowledge of the working class.' It also warned against using classes to foster 'capitalist technological development'. (cited by Lumley 1990)

Workers wrote enthusiastic commentaries: 'For the first time the principle of education as a right in general has been introduced, not tied to company interests, but […] as an attempt to break down the separation between work and study' (cited by Lumley 1990).

Huge numbers of workers, peasants, and then women (Caldwell 1983), used the entitlement to achieve a qualification, but new needs were also emerging, especially in big urban areas. Issues related to mass migration from the South to the industrialised North, housing problems, changes in family and school, mental health issues. Besides, women were signaling discrimination in the workplace, deregulated labor, sexual violence, and struggles around bodily and health issues. So, the 150-Hours became a framework where new and shared forms of knowing could be developed, especially among women, of their situation—enabling them to take collective action against oppression.

However, in the Seventies, radical Italian feminists choose the 'separatist' way: they abandoned male dominated public spaces and refused the dominant master-slave narrative of class struggle, since it excluded women (Lonzi 1974). The 'feminism of difference' (Bracke 2014) invites women to act as 'unexpected subjects' (Bono and Kemp 1991), by bringing to the forefront of the political agenda, as a priority, the quest for a fuller expression of subjectivity. This entails rejecting institutional fixed identities (Leccardi 2016), as well as going beyond mere introspection, to enhance the relational and social value of narration as self-interrogation by reciprocal witnessing, which in turn enables the collective recognition of multiple and creative identities. As Cavarero (2000) argues, feminism has a relational grasp on narration: we tell our story because we are moved by the desire for a self, but we need the other to really hear and recognize who we are. Entrustment, or *affidamento*, a political and relational practice between women, 'establishes a paradigm of women's relations connecting "weaker" and "stronger" women' (Parati and West 2002, p. 19).

So, the feminist movement (de Clementi 2002) chose to cultivate the private sphere, consciousness, and nonviolence; they reinvented the political (Bracke 2014), not least by reading psychoanalysis and philosophy—Freud, Lacan, Sartre, Foucault, besides Marx and Gramsci—through an activist, rather than an academic lens (Sapegno 2002; Malagreca 2006). Textual analysis became a form of self-interrogation and collective quest, as in the activities of the Women's Collective Bookstore (1987, 1990), or the philosophical community Diotima and feminist scholars like Muraro and Cavarero (2000). They reframed the North American feminist practice of 'consciousness raising' as 'a practice of the unconscious', focused on desire and the symbolic order (Sapegno 2002), and aimed to disrupt the stereotypical patriarchal representation of women as passive, consumerist, sexual objects, or child-bearing bodies with no will of their own. And to build, among themselves, in the first instance, more creative and freer ways of being a woman (Bracke 2014). They took direct initiative against the Catholic Church, the capitalist/consumerist society and the Communist Party, the latter being blamed for acting as a 'benevolent father', silencing 'overly autonomous'

women, and encouraging their partners or fathers to stop them, violently, if required.

The 150-Hours frame, then, became an opportunity to create alternative spaces for learning that were not meant to improve productivity or performance, or to achieve a qualification, but to foster new forms of subjectivity through meaningful experiences. In cultural centres, bookshops, and universities, free exchanges between students and teachers, workers, migrants, and women of different social classes, were sustained by new group pedagogies based on lived experience, enhanced discussion on work, health, oppression, and social change as well as activism. Movements grew and drew into their orbit intellectuals from the New Left, to promote Gramsci's dream of a 'positive counter-hegemony'. The impact of social movements, and namely feminism, on Italian society was considerable (Bracke 2014), in terms of new laws and reforms, and the diffusion of a new culture of subjectivity, respectful of feelings, experience, and desire, and critical of societal representations, stereotypes, and clichés that imprison not only women, but every 'category' of people.

All the above, however, was fragile and short term. Tensions and social turmoil became stronger, as did the polarisation of left and right. In his novel, *The Unseen*, Nanni Balestrini (1989) explores his generation's hopes, struggles, and defeats, by telling the story of a working-class youngster who walks the path from high-school rebellion to squatting, then to a failed attempt to establish a free radio station, only to be finally arrested and imprisoned. Extra-parliamentary groups introduced new violent forms of protest, such as the 'proletarian expropriation', bank robberies, kidnappings, and the aggression or execution (after a so-called 'regular trial') of 'State servants'. As witnessed by Marco Tullio Giordana's film '*The best of youth*' (2003), they depicted themselves as 'guerrilleros', young people using violence to make justice and to realise revolution for a better society; they thought they were in the right, little different from today's terrorists or fundamentalists who turn to violence. Only, they were children of the bourgeoisie, not marginalized people.

I, Laura, was 17 in 1978—the apex of violence, with the kidnapping and slaughter by the Red Brigades of former Prime Minister and leading

Christian Democrat Aldo Moro. Very rapidly, the dream of dialogue and reciprocity, and of a new creative articulation of politics, was disrupted by violence, justifying anti-democratic laws, and the increased manipulation of consent against 'politicisation'. I remember my own disorientation, disillusion about the will and capacity of institutions to listen and answer real needs, and the split between those who trusted and justified violence as a path to social change, and those who were too frightened to risk participation. At that time, nonviolent, dialogical methods found little support in the university, no safe space for discussion: the universe was split in two, with nothing in the middle. My suspicion of formal education and institutionalisation was born then, and I still struggle, as a professor, with the same dilemma. I likewise see the polarisation of individual interests and organisational purposes as crucial to understand the decline of popular education in Italy, and maybe in Europe. But I cannot separate my own biography, and struggles, from this idea and from the excruciating feeling that a few have prevailed over the many, and bottom-up processes that were so lively, creative, and potentially transformative, were de-vitalised by the control of bigger powers.

Many Women

Writing this chapter I, Laura, became increasingly aware of the many women to whom I am a debtor. Women of my mother's generation, working in the post-war years, sometimes after fighting Fascism at the risk of their own lives; protagonists of a first, incomplete and 'wounded emancipation' (Bravo, in Bracke 2014), with hidden oppressive effects. It did not address contradictions of roles and the loss of identity due to a false promise of equality. Then other women, in the Seventies, were able to fuel my imagination and consciousness, by their creative forms of civic engagement, weaving social and existential themes, shared practices of self-consciousness, entrustment, narration, and discourse analysis. Transforming reality by transforming our relationship to it and among us: something that any woman can achieve, which makes us, me, a subject in my story, and possibly a living mediator of change.

The feminism of difference achieved a silent revolution, maybe one whose memory is lost (Melandri, in Bracke 2014); one illustrating how self-narration and self-questioning among friends can be a political and educational experience, maybe the most relevant for many of us. It creates meaning and bonds, and generates a sense of 'we': *Who am I (becoming) for you, who is telling my story? And who could you be for me, whose story am I telling?* The basis of auto/biographical learning exists in these reciprocal questions. In feminist circles, biography was a learning space: I owe to Lea Melandri, a leading figure of Italian feminism, the practice of 'experiential writing', using citation and annotation from different texts, along with self-narration, to create new, highly personal and yet universal texts. An embodied practice of writing as inquiry, to excavate stories and those meanings that were overlooked and silenced by dominant narratives.

I, Linden, am left musing over Laura's thoughts and of being a man in struggles for social transformation and democratisation. As part of the problem, perhaps, rather than the solution. There is a men's movement, but it is not equivalent to the women's movement because men are the ones who tend to hold the power and control access to resources. In the context of psychoanalysis and depth psychology, many men have questioned what being a man could be, beyond fierce competitiveness, uncontrolled acquisitiveness, brash display and destructive sexual power games. After all, this is a historical moment when an unreconstructed, power obsessed, and narcissistic form of masculinity has seized the commanding political heights in the United States, and parts of Europe. But it is also a moment when many men are struggling to rethink what it means to be masculine, and to transcend simple binaries with the feminine. Maybe we need to look towards single fathers for some of the answers. They too can learn to play with their children, to take emotional care of family context and local environments, and even to channel their aggression (which is far from simply undesirable) into new social movements. Ones that seek to open space for women and diverse families too (Samuels 2015). By giving some thought to her-story we can try to compensate, in some way, in our own struggles to transform.

Concluding Thoughts

In writing the chapter, we became painfully aware that most references in our book—most of our cultural references indeed—draw on the work of western educated men, and this contrasts with the basic ideas of popular education to do with inclusion and social justice. But women and people from all groups and cultures, not least indigenous, have been extensively involved in popular and adult education, in research and, more specifically, in the practices of transformative learning. Out of 44 authors of the handbook of transformative learning (Taylor et al. 2012), 29 are women, indeed, and some of Eastern or mixed origins. For example, Nadira Charaniya is 'an Afro-Indian, British, Canadian, American Muslim woman', 'raised in four different countries on three different continents' (Charaniya 2012, p. 233), who has studied the connections between transformative learning and cultural-spiritual processes, not least in the context of interreligious dialogue. We need more 'unexpected' perspectives, from Asia, Africa and Latin America, maybe to discover that popular education is still alive in places where individualism, consumerism, and competition are less powerful (but then, for how long, under the pressure of globalisation?). The voices of millions of people who participated in popular education, and still do, in many parts of the world, could help de-centre our perspective further, by bringing greater diversity, different epistemologies, and new and differently nuanced ideas of social justice into the space.

We have also shown the impact of feminism in the Italian context. Why, then, is adult education research and transformative learning theory only tangentially affected by feminist work? Catherine Irving and Leona English (2011) argue that, while Mezirow's empirical work started with women returning to college, neither his deliberations then nor in more recent work have focused specifically on women and structural issues; only a few feminist studies were published in the *Journal of Transformative Education* in the period examined, and they were based on consciousness raising and/or participation. A neglect of gender issues seems to apply more generally to adult education, for example in the United Kingdom, as Munby (2003) notes with reference to the WEA.

Apart from a few feminist scholars, the same applies in Italy. It is paradoxical to talk about, and research perspective transformation, when gender can be so invisible.

We have also noticed common themes across popular education in our different analyses. Of the temptation to violence but also strong resistance to it, in non-violent social movements. We have observed tensions around knowledge, the role of rationality, and the silenced need for imagination and creativity, and to acknowledge messiness; and maybe the case for good enough praxis, rather than the dangerous idea of the perfect perspective in the theory and practice of transformation. We have witnessed strong spiritual and even religious influences and the importance of seeing the divine in the other, and of adult education as the Kingdom socially incarnate. There is emphasis given to the sacred in the earth, in all her splendour and frailty.

We have noted how interconnections can be woven between the personal, the interpersonal and the political, transcending a myopic individualism. And of the place of love and recognition in struggles to transform ourselves and society. The history of popular education provides both warnings as well as possibilities, optimism and pessimism, in the struggle for more equitable and just collective transformation. As in in any personal effort to transform, we question whether a state of complete repose, or perfection, is ever possible. The important point may be to keep on keeping on trying and to learn from our failures. And from the awareness that others have tried to make things better, and have occasionally succeeded, if never in conditions of their own choosing.

9

Imagine

In this chapter, we focus, in our pilgrimage, on the role of the imagination and aesthetic representation as powerful triggers, and necessary ingredients for learning, building knowledge and deeper understanding of the human condition. Both Dewey and Bateson praised the composition and contemplation of art as a celebration of the human capacity for giving form to experience. The search for Grace (Bateson 1967) is about harmonization and the possibility of composing opposites. This is not only the artist's work, but something for every one of us. In fact, we share and communicate our experience and transform its meaning by giving it material form. Lived experience and embodied feelings translate into sounds (think of the newborn's gurgling), gestures, images, metaphors, stories, long before we can systematically describe, classify, or explain them. Self-consciousness, transformation and transcendence are ineffable experiences (from the Latin: not easily spoken), so they need aesthetic representation (from the Greek word *aesthesis*, meaning in relation to the senses).

There is a specific value, then, in an artistic imagination for adult education and lifelong learning, to create space for new possibility, especially in difficult, obscure and challenging situations. It is remarkable

in fact that the humanities, poetry, novels, figurative arts, theatre, cinema, photography, dance, are being re-discovered in different strands of research and intervention, including in narrative medicine (Charon 2006; Launer 2002), social research (Leavy 2015), aesthetic pedagogy (Clover 2006, 2010; Clover et al. 2013), arts-based methods (Fraser 2018), autoethnographic and auto/biographical research (Bartleet 2013; Formenti and West 2016). 'Thinking in terms of stories' (Bateson 1979, p. 14) is how to compose emotional and cognitive elements, perceptions and feelings, subjective truth and objective data, narrative and historical fact, into more of a whole. It is to re-balance overly rational and purposeful thought. Art in such terms can constitute a royal road to transformative experience, at both a personal and collective level (Kokkos 2017; Lawrence 2012; Butterwick and Lawrence 2009; Hayes and Yorks 2007; Clover 2006; Clover and Stalker 2007).

We mentioned, in Chapters 5 and 6, the role of play and playfulness in human flourishing. We have drawn on Winnicott (1971) to consider the capacity to play in relatively spontaneous, heartfelt and uninhibited ways as fundamental to profounder forms of learning, in later as well as early life. Following psychoanalysis, we include, under the umbrella of playfulness, a capacity for free association in the symbolic world, enabling us to maintain a good enough quality of relationship to experience and meaning making. Play is central to the psychoanalytic process: the analytic hour can involve a loosening of rigid responses to experience, a letting go and exploration of images in the here and now of the therapeutic relationship, as well as what may have happened in the there and then of earlier times. This can be a good model for education too. For Winnicott, play was a way of realising and experiencing a 'true self', as against the false self which acts like a screen defending us against spontaneity, expressiveness and the play of making connections (Symington 1986).

So, to engage with our disorientating dilemmas, and with the big questions and crises of life, we need to be creative, to feel and think in imaginative ways. We draw from a range of aesthetic experiences, and relationships, involving the sensitive body, as well as diverse cultural objects (movies, songs, paintings, novels), plus rituals, images and narratives; and from what we call the sacred too. While, on the one hand, we

critically reflect on our knowledge and explanations of what enchants us, and how and why, we seek to maintain an open relationship to experience, to *feel* what enchants, and to seek wisdom in the process (Voss and Wilson 2017; Fraser 2018; Tisdell and Swartz 2011).

Yet, we are so used in Europe and North America, to dominant, scientistic modes of knowledge production, with their dry rituals and practices, and their dry and unemotional forms of writing; and sometimes to a sceptical, polemical, almost cynical way of thinking. We tend to neglect the role of enchantment, of dreaming and playfulness in learning and human flourishing. The language of experience, interpretation and education can be soulless, with words like beauty, ecstasy, grace or transcendence expunged from the lexicon. Many academics consider that what makes us human is the capacity for rational thinking, for teaching and transmitting knowledge using precise words and numbers, logic and modelling. This is only a partial truth. The essence of education is the transmission of dreams and hopes, of encounters with beauty, and the inspiration of values, as well as an engagement with the informal and embodied, which give meaning and substance to formal, verbal, and logical knowledge. Such a synthesis can bring together so-called 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' forms of inquiry—another dualism needing harmonisation and balance. When our actions only confirm habitual ways of knowing and learning, a potentially rich panoply of possibility is narrowed down and trivialised; one that can help us to better know who we are and the world around us.

Harmony might be an illusion, however: many artists, especially in contemporary times, present the uncanny and unthinkable in their and maybe our despair. They bear witness to injustice, exclusion, pollution, abuse of power, oppression and contradiction, despite calls for harmony. They reveal fears and limits surrounding its pursuit, as well as the dangerous tendency to eradicate what does not fit. This is part of a critique of modernism. There are echoes of Bauman in this, of how modernity sought to extinguish objects and people that did not quite conform to modernity's illusions. Grace, then, as we use it, is not the result of 'anaesthetised beauty', but a celebration of a fulsome engagement with the world. It is a profoundly political as well as an educational affair. It is not by chance that political movements for more democratic societies

often have artists on their side, while fascist and illiberal systems tend to hate art and destroy it; or at least the forms that fail to conform to their totalising view of truth and the world (they label it 'degenerate art').

We are not talking here about professional art: we in fact challenge the boundary between 'real artists' and 'amateurs' (people who *love* creating). The public identity of an artist depends on social, cultural, economic factors, and recognition by others. We are more interested in aesthetic experience and the capacity for transforming through imagining, creating, building, separating and composing. A child who feels safe enough does this every day, and in the process, composes the future person she will be. Many adults bring a playful quality to their lives, or re-discover it, and keep themselves nourished. As Josef Beuys, a leading figure of German contemporary art, stated, 'Every man is an artist'. And, of course, every woman, even if western 'civilization' has misrecognized, over centuries, women's creativity. Besides, we lay emphasis on shared imagination, against the individualistic myth of the artist as isolated genius. Aesthetic representation has historically been a crucial element in human gathering, in rituals, games and feasts. It continues to have great value in diverse cultures and groups.

So, we explore in this chapter the meaning for us, as academics, adult educators, psychotherapists, and human beings, of doing and contemplating art, as, perhaps, a golden thread to weave understanding, insight, and form, as well as to expand and re-enchant our lives. We gather a wide range of phenomena, languages and activities under the umbrella of aesthetic representation, or 'abduction' (a word Bateson borrowed from C.S. Peirce); or 'presentational knowing' in Heron's words (Heron 1996; Mullett 2008; Kasl and Yorks 2012). Bateson wrote that 'Any change in our epistemology will involve shifting our whole system of abduction. We must pass through the threat of potential chaos where thought is impossible' (1979, p. 158). Shifting our whole system of abduction could be another definition of transformative learning.

We use words that may be uncommon among researchers and educators—like *gaze* and *beauty*, alongside *love* and *truth*—loaded as they are with many connotations, which often means their abandonment in academic discourse. We use them with some trepidation because of

the question of whose beauty and truth? Poststructuralism and post-modernism, in their different ways, have posed such questions time and again (Fraser 2018). But it can lead to a relativistic, ironic detachment towards any attempt to give form and meaning to experience, as we place ourselves above and beyond what could enchant us. As stated, part of the problem is the dominance of rationalist perspectives, while the perspectives of indigenous peoples or other marginalized groups—or even our own heart felt responses—are rooted in aesthetics. We witnessed in Chapter 8, how the feminist critique of Freire's notions of 'naming' and dialogue, had the power to challenge rationality to the core, provoking earthquakes of the soul, even when accepting the idea of many truths and diverse understanding of beauty. Enchantment is not irretrievably lost but can be expanded in a cosmopolitan sensibility.

Every Woman Is an Artist: An Autoethnographic Exploration (Laura)

Biographies can illuminate the role of play, fantasy, and creativity in shaping our human becoming, at all ages. Many adults talk of how, and why, they abandoned the artistic path early in life: 'You are not good enough to paint, sing, dance or write. You will never be, so please stop', they are told. This craziness, at the heart of our educational systems, is detrimental to healthy life. My relationship with art has deep biographical roots, and yet ambivalent ones, too, as so often happens. It took time to come to terms with this.

If I go back to childhood, I remember my early joyful explorations of drawing, singing, dancing, performing, as well as reading and writing. I soon discovered the masterpieces of painting, the challenging sounds of jazz music, and amazing beauty of good artisan work, thanks to my father, a self-directed and curious learner, who taught me how to look at art ('Tell me, Laura, where does the light come from?'), and how important details are, as well how to listen and enjoy harmony alongside disharmony. But then, there was the mortification of art at school—technical drawing, solfeggio, grammar, and the oblivion of the

artist in myself. I recognize the formative value of exercise (I talked in Chapter 3 about the shaping of my epistemology by technical drawing), but there was too much pressure on performing with a loss of joy and a corresponding disequilibrium.

I had to re-discover my own voice and creativity later, as a mature woman, when I started a new quest, as many people do, *amateurs* in any language that allows them to feel more deeply, to flourish, and be whole. Until the moment when abduction, the search for forms, became so important that I wanted it to become an integral part of my professional life, in teaching and researching. As it is now.

If I go back to childhood, I remember drawing at the Arts and Crafts School organised by the local Mutual Aid Society. A school for adults, based on learning by doing, with a tutor in the class: the history of adult education in Italy is largely about such places, where people organised classes for themselves and others. Evening or weekend courses, to give access to workers. My drawing class was on Saturday afternoons. I was the only child, and a girl. Others seemed too grown-up and distant to talk to, but I wanted to draw, not talk. Sandro (he had been my father's teacher too) gave me, on arrival, a folder with images of masterpieces. A painting with fishes caught my eye. I'd never seen anything like it! Decorative but unreal, uncanny. It was my first contact with modern art, yet I did not realise it. 'You must do an exact copy'. Then hours flew by, unnoticed. By the time my mother came to collect me, the drawing was finished. The two pieces looked identical. The Maestro's comment—'There's some potential here!'—nurtured my desire to return. As I did, every year, from seven to twelve, on Saturdays, in that crowded and noisy workshop.

Now I know that those afternoons were my emotional laboratory. It was not only about the hand, or the eye. All the colouring, experimenting with different techniques, copying and inventing, were an anchor of salvation in difficult times, and a golden path to wild imagination. Drawing at school never gave me the same feeling of freedom, exploration, and deep pleasure.

Doing and feeling lie at the root of any aesthetic experience. We lose ourselves in the repetition of gestures, through the eye-brain-arm-hand cycle, with soul at its very centre. A white sheet, an empty space, is a gift

for the imagining mind, a clearing out of the intellect, leaving space for 'other' voices and stories to emerge. The artistic gesture is sacred: material yet not controllable, free and intentional at one and the same time. When the hand—the whole body in fact—takes over, time goes by in a sort of reverie—a creative trance every artist knows. Most of them would say: 'It's not me, you know, but the sound, the form, the character striving to get out'. Art knows how to silence the planner, the cortex, and leave space for the sensory: perceptions, feelings, deep emotion. It is vibrant with a potentially liberating emotional, symbolic, spiritual meaning. This is why I love to invite adult learners—my students, the professionals I work with, the participants in 'generative' interviews—to play with artistic languages. To search their forms.

When I watch someone engaged in creative activities, as in cooperative research cycles, I resonate with their sense of relaxed pleasure but also urgency, and even occasional fury, when they express strong emotions. Emotions are the very stuff of doing art. As an adult educator, I love to assist the silent drawing of a group of grown-ups, in a room smelling of wax and wood, and vibrant with sounds, swishes and rustles, ticking and sighs. They look intentional and meditative, with open vigilant eyes and yet free, playful. In these occasions, I feel my body gradually relaxing, my breath regularising, my hyperactive mind eventually reposing, and yet becoming extraordinarily generative with free association and visions.

Reading was a sort of addiction for me, as a child. A fragile girl, often sick, once cursed by hepatitis and four months in isolation. It was a blessing indeed! Books, as intimate friends, gave me solace and the pleasure of imagining landscapes, characters, scenes. I loved stories of abandoned and maltreated children, who were able to rescue themselves. Adventurous, stubborn, and self-assured. I see now how they were representing my problem and its solution. That is what imagination often does: offering unconscious answers to our struggles. For each story, I built an inner theatre. In Jung's terms, a choir of selves, voices and archetypes. I also loved to re-tell the stories I had read to a diverse audience of cousins and friends. My interpretation of teaching is rooted in those early experiences of 'transmission'. Storytelling is as important as systematic, paradigmatic discourse. As soon as I was able to write, I

began to invent new plots. By which, again, I was expressing emotion, giving form to my sorrows and hopes, thoughts and values. Giving form to me.

Biographical experience matters. I learned from my participants and students that reading and writing are linked, for too many, with traumatic school experience, rarely to pleasure and imagination. But they can be re-discovered. Human beings, in all latitudes, adore stories, from childhood onwards. Thinking in stories is the human way to create worlds and generate meanings, before and beyond formal education. Reading poems and novels gives access to the human world, its depths and wonder. Why then is it so absurdly neglected, devalued, and denigrated? And what can adult education do, to re-vitalise our access to literature, theatre, music and poetry?

More generally, as suggested, aesthetic experience is marginalised in adult life. When I ask professionals to engage in 'childish' activities like colouring, dancing, singing, or reading a poem aloud, they can feel threatened and delegitimised, especially if highly educated or donning a public academic persona (men more than women). They need strong motivation, time, and a safe space, to let go of the internal censor and (self) critique. Or they hide the pleasure of creation under serious umbrellas: art-therapy owes some of its success to the context that legitimises it as a 'cure'. Art, however, is *not* a cure; it is a fundamental part of our humanity, of our becoming. It is about authentic expression and communication. And, a source of epistemological shift.

We also should recognize that our artistic biography is embedded in a context of class and social grouping (Bourdieu 1979). In the Sixties, when I was born, where you came from counted a great deal. Members from dominant social groups went to museums and theatres, read good literature, and were entitled to define taste. They had their favourite lists of classics, novels, and must-know performances, that confirmed their aesthetic values and ways of seeing. In those years, my family was living a social and economic transition, so they pushed me towards education and I learned the codes and confidence to interpret knowledge and art. The children of marginalised classes had—and still have, maybe, even more so now—reduced access to masterpieces and the codes to interpret them. But being the child of enthusiastic parents and self-directed

learners, I felt relatively free to explore. Then it was the hippies—long haired, colourfully dressed, liberated men and women alike (or that was the pretence)—who taught me that aesthetic values are not absolute. As a child of pop and mass culture, I was enabled to ask what is meaningful art? What really counts nowadays, at a planetary level? Can so-called 'minor' art, like comics, rock music, or a TV series, act as a trigger for biographical reflexivity? My answer is yes, of course, and our artistic biography reveals much about us and our life worlds, our generation and the culture in which we were raised. In my personal somewhat crazy playlist, Vivaldi and Rafael meet the Beatles and African art, Schultz and Zero Calcare, Marina Abramovic meets Banksy. What about your list?

Linden, the Role of Story and Every Man (or Woman?) as a Performance

My mother loved the Greek myths and read them to me when I was a child, as I did to her. One of the most important gifts she gave me was a beautifully illustrated collection of the myths, including the story of Persephone. I was entranced but also, and always, distressed by the idea of her being sent to the underworld for eating pomegranate seeds. She was playing, you will recall, with her Nymph companions and was seized by Hades who carried her off to become his bride. Her mother Demeter was distraught at her disappearance and searched for her throughout the world, with the help of the goddess Hecate, bearing torches. When Demeter, goddess of the harvest and agriculture, learned that the god Zeus had conspired in her daughter's abduction, she was angry and refused to let the earth bear fruit until Persephone was returned. Zeus eventually consented, but because the girl had tasted the food of Hades—the pomegranate seeds—she had to spend six months of the year there with her husband.

Persephone became the goddess queen of the underworld, and of Spring growth, and was worshipped alongside her mother as a goddess of Spring's bounty. Her return to the underworld saw the dying

of plants and the end of growth. The return of Spring was wonderful, I felt, but the price paid by Persephone seemed high. Stories have the power to entrance and disturb. Quite why my reaction to the story was so strong, I don't fully know, but stories can have a disorientating as well as enchanting effect. Like the tale of the Pied Piper of Hamlyn, too, who led all those children away from their families, to be lost forever, through the power of his music. Undoubtedly the power of the stories was partly a product of the relationship with my mother, no doubt touching something deep in her biography, which in turn was communicated to me. Maybe the stories touched a deep frustration at being trapped in a marriage and traditional role. My family, like all families, was a place of security but of messy emotional bewilderment too. Shakespeare's Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, always had a powerful impact, when I studied it at school. Hamlet's father was slain by his uncle who became king and married his mother. My uncle moved into our house, when I was a child, which I really wanted, because he had been made homeless and I thought it might stop my parents rowing. But this was done at a price: of my father feeling excluded and displaced, emotionally, by an uncle. Watching a performance of the play, even now, can be unbearable.

Stories matter deeply to me, and always have. I was a good story teller as a child and loved the sense of enchantment this could bring. I made up stories and played with characters, using my voice and gesture to make them come alive to others. I performed many roles—villains and heroes, the lost and sad, the distressed child and the angry parent, as well as wild and meek animals—with visceral feeling, drawing as I did, without conscious knowledge, on my own experience. It brought life and form to what would otherwise have remained repressed, or difficult to articulate; a life finding dramatic expression, at least in part, in the theatre of storytelling. This can be a powerful way to embrace and make sense of embodied experience in biographical work

Stories, and enactment, have a power both to disorientate as well as aesthetically transform. I was a member of a group of psychologists and analytic psychotherapists in Oxford, inspired by Jung, who placed great importance on sound and movement, rather than words, to express primitive or early feelings. We would choose a play or text, and explore

its themes using dance, gesture, music and voice, but excluding words. We might shout, scream, laugh or cry; or groan, whimper, shake or escape into the foetal position. One text we worked with was Euripides' *Medea.* She was the outsider driven to murder her two children because of Jason, her husband's betrayal. On one occasion I was locked into an intense encounter with one of the leaders, David Holt, a distinguished Jungian analyst. We moved together, intuitively, spinning like tops and there were screams of pain and anguish to express the depth of feeling. When we stopped, there was a long silence and the group formed a circle. We talked about the experience, and others said they were frightened by the power of movement and sound, and the pain of performance. David and I talked of our broken marriages, of divorce, and feelings of betraying our wives and families, like Jason; and of symbolically murdering our children. The conversation was deep, pregnant, raw, without haste. Others shared feelings of relational breakdown, of betrayal and even murder, in a symbolic sense. We witnessed the power of enactment to give form to deep feeling. Reason or rationality could only enter later. Stories and the imagination—both our own and those of literary others—can be the crucible for transformative experience.

But theatre can also be a means of escape from ourselves into other characters. An escape from pain and confusions of identity and selfhood. Or from a problem, an obsession, a terror of who we might be, and the feeling of lack, or the absence of longed for and idealised qualities in ourselves. This might have to do with psychological splitting of self into denigration and idealisation of the other and maybe a rejection of what is ordinary and messy in who we are. The theatre can make us feel grand and important, but it does not last, like playing a grand role in life—as the strutting manager, politician or academic; it eventually dissipates into emptiness and quiet despair, however mediated by drugs or alcohol. We can be left feeling empty and bereft. Recovering what is ordinary (in my own case, coming from a working-class background and feeling ashamed of this), or what has been split off (the feminine in being male, for instance) lies at the heart of the trans-formation processes of psychoanalysis. There is an ethic of truth seeking, required in transformative learning of many kinds. There needs to be a goal, a possibility of resolution, of seeing an object or self more clearly. One

of my recent books—*Distress in the City, Racism, Fundamentalism and a Democratic Education* (West 2016)—expresses aspects of this well: when returning to the city of my birth and in responding to its present difficulties (economic, cultural, and political) with concern and care. And when seeking to bring the suffering, hurt, misrecognition, anger and even abandonment to aesthetic life. Some of the writing was deeply personal, as I sought to interrogate the potential fundamentalist in me, maybe in all of us, as a way of connecting with the other, the racist or Islamist, auto/biographically. I too had sought acceptance, in my first job in the strange habitus of a university. I wanted to live a fantasy of other people's academic lives, of the assured academic who confidently talked the academy's discourse. The price, however, was a denial of the truth of who I was, and also of the complexity and transformative potential of workers' education.

Abduction and the Reasons of the Heart

> …*We'd been offered a trip*
> *from which we'd surely be returning soon,*
> *wouldn't we…*
> (Wisława Szymborska, 'One version of events', 1998, p. 254)

Beauty and ugliness can shake us out of our mind sets and offer moments of truth. We need an epistemological turn, and art can sustain it. What Bateson called 'conscious purpose' (1972, pp. 426–447) became a problem for human kind, and for the environment and whole planet, when it ceased being in equilibrium with the human capability to resonate with nature, to feel context, to be responsive to the other's emotions. *Abduction* (Bateson 1979, pp. 157–159) nurtures our systemic wisdom by connecting the conscious and unconscious mind. Referring to Freud, Bateson recognises primary process as governing the changes in our body and soul, prior to abstract and paradigmatic construction. Art, religion, play, humour, and metaphor are based on the rhythms and logic of primary process. Slow and deep rhythms. It is not

a matter of repression or ejection; this is how our body-mind works, unaware of its own functioning, or the millions of influences through which we constantly become who we are. For structural, economic and psychological reasons, we are only aware of a small arc of a much larger circuit. Art comes to the rescue.

Bateson's epistemological and methodological manifesto—*Style, Grace, and Information in Primitive Art* (1967)—was about this: art integrates the reasons of reason with the 'reasons of the heart' (a quote from Pascal). It creates a corrective, healing moment of communication 'about the species of unconsciousness' (p. 137). It celebrates form and relationship, of part and whole, self and others, self and environment, the individual and culture. A form of unconscious communication through the materiality of an object (a piece of art) and the skillful technique entailed. A composition of difference—the details, the outlines and their geometry, the disposition of forms, the lights and shadows— reveals patterns and conveys hidden messages. In contemporary art, this is often achieved by its reversal, sometimes a rejection of technique, as with 'ready-mades' or inkblots. By seeing art as communication and relationship (Bourriaud 1998), the artistic vanguard of the twentieth century created new ways to connect to the world and audiences. Deep changes in art mirror larger societal transformations. Micro, meso, and macro are in constant, dynamic interplay.

What is interesting for education is that the aesthetic experience introduces us to a 'pertinent source of randomness', making it possible to think and evolve (Bateson 1979). We are both authors and spectators in a search for beauty and a relationship of the whole body (not only the eye) to the world, where forms are created and/or recognized (Bateson and Bateson 1989). Beauty is a resonance, a feeling of connection between inside and outside, a bond between us and the world in which we live. A feeling of reassurance, peace and pleasure, but also of awe, surprise, and amazement that can perturb us. A swerve, a gap, a difference always precedes and accompanies the experience of beauty.

If, as we argued in Chapter 6, we are living organisms producing difference and transformations of difference, we are also creators—not only users or consumers—of beauty, and of its opposite, horror and ugliness. They do not simply come from outside but are born out of

the play of inner and outer worlds, like racism and fundamentalism that Linden writes about (West 2016). The uncanny, the opposite of what is reassuring or familiar, represents aspects of the unconscious. We know, from psychoanalysis, that everything we do not want to see, can, at the same time, attract us; we 'know' obscurely that horror is part of us, of our destiny, hidden in the depths of our soul. Engaging with such truth can set us free, however momentarily.

So, aesthetic experience is not an optional extra, a *divertissement*. The encounter with the world entails an ongoing physical/emotional positioning, where our action finds resistance, and beauty can be the unexpected reward of an interaction: an unpretentious wildflower, a crack in the wall, a wrinkly face can move us to tears, if we are present and alive. It is the biological and psychological foundation of the human condition. We experience aesthetic judgement as emerging from ongoing living: we react with our whole sensorial system, out of control, at any moment. Objects, others, places, landscapes are never neutral, if we are alive. The neutral would be in-difference, avoidance, or trivialisation. Like the walking dead, we easily get anaesthetized, when life is marked by custom, by impersonal acting, by unseeing. 'Education' is too often an encounter of the walking dead.

Composition and Contemplation: From Materiality to Self-Reflexivity, to Dialogue

Art and imagination need materials to work with. To *compose* (a text, a drawing, a dance) is a concrete action, by which we choose and connect words, make marks, gestures, or bring images together, hence creating distinction and connection, boundaries, shape and patterns. It is situational: aesthetic composition connects in time and space, locally, what has been separated—or so it appears—and provides a provisional home for the fragmented, unknowable, and unspeakable. This process does not seek Power, but Grace (Bateson 1967).

There is, in Linden's story, above, a performative and imaginal dimension, connecting words and fragments of meaning in sequences

and patterns (Bruner 1990), thus shaping the message. 'This is a story'—a piece of art, a representation—and is a context marker in communication (Bateson 1972); one that doubles meaning. It creates an object, separate from its author, an artefact to be presented, heard, interpreted, edited, and hence re-signified by every interaction. An object that can be concretely printed, framed, exposed, read aloud, illustrated, and through these operations talks back to the author, often in surprising ways. There is an element of randomness in creating new possibilities.

All of which also needs rules, materials, and technical solutions; in the creative process, resistance is offered by materiality, the environment, ourselves, or others, but this is generative. Composition is always material: *embodied* in voice (telling, reading, performing), in writing, moving, drawing, or installing objects. We perceive the pattern through its material appearance, hence we interpret it. We can trivialise an artefact by focusing on content and trying to explain it. Content analysis is the easiest and most common, since it reassures us with simple answers, in our need to know 'the plot', or 'who is the villain'. It nurtures the human fascination for a happy (or dramatic) end: we strive to 'close the form', even if we know that a real masterpiece is constitutively unfinished, we love the illusion of knowing 'how it ends' or 'what it means'. But the meaning conveyed by a work of art is subtle, not self-evident. It has to do with the pattern to connect with a bigger picture.

Art, and especially contemporary art, shows that we should not trust appearances. It invites us to witness dis-connection, nonsense, fragmentation, and paradoxes as a result of our (limited) perspectives. As in Surrealism. Magritte (1898–1967), the Belgian surrealist painter, gave food for thought to scholars such as Foucault (1973), Mitchell (1994), and Žižek (1997), among others, with his art that interrogates our epistemology of seeing, disrupting the expected 'correspondence' between reality and discourse, or between what we perceive and what we consider as true. His famous painting *The Treachery of Images* (Fig. 9.1) presents a pipe and a sentence—*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*—that force us into a dilemma: their circular and dialectical relationship changes the meaning, in fact, of both image and phrase, and invites the observer to

Fig. 9.1 The Treachery of Images (*This Is Not a Pipe*), René Magritte (1929). LACMA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

question the overall meaning of the painting itself. Is Magritte trying to teach us something?

The painting is an invitation to question our way of striving for truth. Should we trust what is represented, or told, or perceived as 'real'? Or should we abandon the naïve realist idea of representation, to embrace a more problematic and dialectic epistemology? The treachery of images becomes a treachery of perspectives as well. Constructivists are very fond of Magritte, for these reasons. In another painting—*La condition humaine*, the human condition (Fig. 9.2)—the Belgian artist represents two of his favoured themes, here again in a dialectic, circular composition: a painting from a window and a painting within a painting.

The *unframed* image of a landscape, apparently represented in every detail, hides the real scene beneath. Being unframed, it makes it difficult to recognize it as a representation: hence, one assumes a correspondence based upon a false presupposition. We do not know what is behind, in fact. But then we realize that the 'true landscape' is a representation too.

Fig. 9.2 *La condition humaine*, René Magritte (1933). National Gallery of Art, Washington. https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.70170.html

Where is the 'real view'? Out there? Inside here? The human condition is about learning how to use and trust our perspectives, even if we will never be able to grasp reality itself, or to fully trust our knowledge of it. This is a cross every one of us must bear.

Contemporary art shows the tensions between meaning and nonsense, beauty and ugliness, for example by representing urban peripheries, abandoned buildings, like hidden treasures of meaning against a backdrop of decay, illness, and violence. Searching for beauty, imagining, dreaming is not a naïve enterprise for 'positive thinkers' and

good-hearted people. Grace and harmony combine with critical think-ing, to reveal limits and shadows or *the absurd in the world*, as Jung, Camus, Dolci, Beckett and Freud taught, among many.

Contemplating art can also be transformative. It is an invitation to enter another's world, to meet a mysterious object to be deciphered, and to wonder about the artist (what was she trying to say?) and to know more about her as well as our own culture. Bateson (1969) illustrated how cultural values are implicated in the artist's material gestures and choices, and affect us. If these affects challenge our worldview, there is a possibility that we might revise some of our assumptions. Aesthetic experience educates us by inviting, and sometimes forcing us towards a physical, metaphoric, emotional, intellectual re-positioning. The 'mes-sage' is not, however, intrinsic to the work of art: it emerges from the relationship between us and it. It is a conversation, a dialogue.

But we are often 'unable to see' (Arasse 2005). When we look at a painting we rely on assumptions. Firstly, in our immediate reaction: I like it, I don't. Why? We do not know. There is no unique answer to this question, 'why?'. To answer, we need to change our position and create the possibly of talking to one another. When we ask 'what do you see?' (as we did in the first metalogue), hints of our frameworks of meaning emerge, that we can then reflect on. Besides, every piece of art contains in principle many details and differences that may trigger multiple sto-ries and interpretations. Daniel Arasse (2005) argues that we see noth-ing until the moment when we begin to look in detail and to tell stories about this. We can nurture, in this way, the dynamic cycle of sensation, action, metaphors, ideas, and new sensations that are created in an encounter with art. We meet with ourselves, with our embodied theo-ries and presuppositions that guide our way of seeing, thinking, react-ing, and thus our emotions and values. And through them, our learning and the building of knowledge, identity and self. Self-reflexivity is a profoundly artistic activity.

Meeting art is challenging, though, especially modern and contem-porary art. It revealed—long before neuroscience (Lehrer 2008)—the features and limits of our mind, of the partiality, deception, and cultural bias that enter the construction of so-called 'reality'. The traditional val-ues of harmony, symmetric composition, and equilibrium, imbued with

colonialist or patriarchal assumptions, confirming Western superiority, were disrupted by artists in various ways, during the twentieth century. Art is recognized as an effective way to deconstruct the cultural system, its habits of mind as well as the discourses and metaphors we live by. It can be an ally, in such terms, of movements for social justice and more generally of a critical education.

Transformation, however, does not descend directly from art, or its contemplation, but from a dynamic cycle triggered by aesthetic experience, entailing self-exploration, positioning and re-positioning, soul work, dialogue, and critical thinking. This is a spiral (Heron 1996; Formenti 2011, 2016, 2017), where aesthetic representation becomes a valuable form of knowing, to be integrated with authentic experience, intelligent understanding, and deliberate action.

Imagination brings authors and audiences into a deeply auto/biographical alliance. The spectator is provoked into the space created, through what she can see, smell, hear, and how she reacts, feels, understands. She can add details with her own inventive mind and heart. Back and forth between the oeuvre and the here-and-now scene, life and meaning, the artist and other. The *mise-en-scène* of art is intrinsically dialogic; it entails positioning, provocation and engagement.

So, we can see art as an emerging form, as a glowing, 'fluctuating' (Caillé and Rey 2004) or 'evocative' object (Bollas 2009) created by ongoing inter-action. We are never passive, not even in the contemplation of art. We see because we interact, and our action finds resistance in the world; emerging patterns show beauty, grace, consonance, connectedness as well as ugliness, carelessness and dis-connection. In primary thinking there is no negation, and opposites meet (Bateson 1972). Beauty is an experience of consonance in the intermediate space between subject and object, potentially healing binary thinking. It is not beauty itself, however, that will save the world (as in Dostoevsky's famous quote), but togetherness: the capacity for symbolic acting, the art of creative composition of our diverse humanity. Disconnection, the dia-bolic separation (from the Greek *dia-ballo*, to separate), can be only healed by sym-bolic composition (syn-ballo, meaning to unify). In Ancient Greece, the 'symbolon' (σύμβολον) was a concrete object representing friendship: when its two separate halves were re-composed,

hospitality was granted to the bearer, as a recognized friend, a member of the family, even many years later.

The Need for Imagination in Education, and a Case Study

'If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing it', the famous dancer Isadora Duncan said in response to someone asking her to explain her work (quoted by Bateson 1972). Another extraordinary woman artist, Georgia O'Keeffe, observed: 'The meaning of a word – to me - is not as exact as the meaning of a colour. Colours and shapes make a more definitive statement than words' (1976, quoted by Lawrence 2012, p. 471). Art exceeds any 'content' to be explained or demonstrated by words; it challenges the power of words to convey meaning. It offers evidence of a different kind, one that touches deeper needs and feelings. Food for feeling, before or beyond thinking, and in multiple ways.

Art is an elusive form of knowing; Emily Dickinson suggested that its truth is never obvious:

> *Tell all the truth but tell it slant–*
> *Success in Circuit lies*
> *Too bright for our infirm Delight*
> *The Truth's superb surprise*
> *As Lightning to the Children eased*
> *With explanation kind*
> *The Truth must dazzle gradually*
> *Or every man be blind*—(Dickinson, n. 1129 in *Complete Poems*
> (1976).

So, when we refer to art in adult education, it is to interrogate our assumptions, to engage in imaginative processes and behave more like the artist does, in a community of practice. In her work with family educators (Formenti 2017), Laura invites participants to connect firstly with their experience and to playfully explore it. Aesthetic

representation, or presentational knowing, is one of four kinds of knowledge (Heron 1996), besides embodied experience, intelligent understanding, and deliberate action, that interconnect in cycles. In a two-year project with family tutors, working with parents whose children were fostered, Laura invited them to explore, in depth, their own representations of their work and role, of the families, their stories, and accidents and events provoking emotions, dilemmas, and haunting questions.

A family tutor is an adult educator whose task is to create space for voice, learning, and agency within the family. Their mandate—given by the State—is to intervene with parents who are defined as socially, psychologically and/or physically vulnerable, and needing to be trained and/or controlled. So, tutoring is an ambiguous activity, entailing autonomous learning processes and recognition, but tending to be overly instructive, riddled with deficit assumptions and prone to impose pre-defined models of parental skills, imbued with colonizing assumptions. Cooperative inquiry is a space for new possibilities. At each meeting, participants draw, do poetry and creative writing, or use photographs and children's books, to let the imagination take the lead. Some meaningful pattern, then, begins to emerge from the conversation and inspires deliberate action towards more effective and ecological ways of working. This project had a turning point when the professionals felt the *desire* to propose the same kind of experience to their families. Some months later, Ludmilla, one of the mothers, witnessed her transformation in a poem:

> *Once, I was insecure*
> *Once, I was fearful*
> *Once, I kept silent*
> *Once, I hated life*
> *Then, a moment arrived*
> *I couldn't keep all inside*
> *I had to explode*
> *Somehow*
> *I had to be heard*
> *By the whole world*

I went
Against all and everyone
I risked
To be fought
I risked
Not to be understood
But eventually I managed
I went ahead of my fears
I'm no more
insecure girl
Now I can enjoy life
And I'm proud of my hit
(Laura's Translation)

This case shows how art can 'set stories in motion' and help to re-connect subjects' experience with educational work. The group of family tutors used the 'gaze' metaphor to address their new epistemological positioning: an 'enamoured, complex, acute, and contagious' (Formenti 2017) gaze was needed, in fact, to overcome the risk of trivialising the other and of stigmatising the families. Step by step, they built a shared repertoire of rich images, words, actions, and representations. There was a public conference at the end of the project, where the family tutors decided not to describe or explain their work, but to engage the public by bringing into the space the voices of parents and children and by offering their personal metaphors for family tutoring, as 'finding a shared rhythm', 'building bridges', 'cultivating the garden with patience and desire', and 'searching for beauty'. They screened photographs of dance, architecture, lush nature, and art. For them, 'being professional' in that moment meant to communicate some of the depth and beauty, as well as the difficulties and challenges, of experience, to a larger audience. The families were there, along with various stakeholders, welfare officers, decision makers and professionals. All of them were deeply provoked and emotionally touched by the presentation.

Poetic communication and authentic participation bring new ways of voicing stories and ourselves, risking new positioning, taking responsibility, and expressing emotions in sustainable shapes. Tutoring, as any

other educational action, is circular: interdependence needs to be celebrated. This is a story of hope, but not mere optimism or positive thinking: the opening of possibilities needs great effort, professional skill, good theory and good methods. Conflicts and errors are unavoidable. But creativity offers ways to manage complexity by legitimising difference, de-constructing frameworks, and re-composing the fragments into larger pictures. In this project, Laura's idea was not to add 'new tools to the educator's kit', but to overcome the functionalist metaphor of a toolbox separated from the body and soul of the educator. A colour box, following O'Keeffe, could be meaningful as we discuss what colour we are going to use, today. Technique and art form a whole, when embodied.

Conclusions

How and why is the aesthetic experience connected to transformation?

First, it shakes us and provokes deep insights. Jung stated that 'soul work' is mostly unconscious but some surfacing is offered by creation: he was an artist himself, drawing, sculpting and building across the whole of his life and shaping his surroundings in a way that resonated with his psyche. The tower he built in Bollingen (Lake Zurich, Switzerland), was meant as a mirror of his unconscious, the place where it was possible for him to be authentically himself (Jung 1963).

Second, creative work is 'material' or 'performative' thinking (Barrett and Bolt 2014; Bolt 2004; Carter 2004), a form of 'theorising in practice', connecting ideas and action, artist and context, inner and outer worlds. It is 'practice', but of a special kind. One we find in the best of the American pragmatic tradition, where beauty is created through a good theory or social form. Gratuitous, free, nourishing, it does not bring money, power, or quick solutions. The claim for practice in adult education is one of meaningful learning and beauty. And what may appear at first sight a useless form can provide a slow and deeply embodied pathway offering some answers to big problems of who we are and might become.

Third, creation is systemic and circular, different from talking, teaching, or writing in the academy. Art objects talk back to their creator, and to others. Creating transforms the creator: after years of practice, the artist's body, skills, sensitivity—and surroundings—are different, shaped by repeated exercise, as well as slow, deep, continuous movement. This is different from the superficial idea of transformation as the sudden leap, insight, or illumination changing a life forever.

This book is an example of creation: writing it has changed us, making us more reflexive about ourselves, the world where we live, and our relationship. The need to overcome our limits, to compose our differences in dialogue, to find a shape or form that satisfies us, not least by integrating personal narratives, poems, and metaphors into our text, compels us to move, if gently and slowly. It is not a big, one off, extraordinary event, but a spirit influencing our conversations, choices, and the understanding of our pilgrimage and lives, over time. It is a transforming action as well as an enactment of who we are and might become. Bateson (1967) placed art together with play and dream as the *useless* par excellence. Beauty, pleasure and taking time have largely been expunged from mainstream education, as they have from politics and economics, for a simple reason: they fulfil and nurture without turning us into consumers. They make us free and purpose-less, in a world where 'experience' is sold and bought and must have exchange value. Beauty and pleasure are the only worthwhile rewards of aesthetic experience, of finding the pattern which connects, in contrast to the perversions of power, the market and commodification.

So, we are aware of the risk of 'using' art and trivialising it. Aesthetic approaches are used to enhance transformative learning, above and beyond dominant, overly rational and cognitive interpretations. The *Handbook of Transformative Learning* (Taylor et al. 2012) contains references to the use of aesthetic languages, embodied narratives, storytelling, artistic expression, fiction and film, to focus learners' experience and trigger insights that challenge frameworks of meaning. Art for critical thinking. Kasl and Yorks (2012), for example, refer to Heron's presentational knowing as an 'epistemological position' and 'a powerful facilitator of holism' (p. 510); Elizabeth Kasl tells a touching story of her struggle with presentational knowing during a workshop where

the invitation to 'give yourself to the clay' brought her unconsciously to sculpt a surprising but meaningful self symbol. The contact with deeper unexpected emotion marked the beginning of 'a three-year experience of profound transformation' (p. 507). And the sculpture stayed with her for a long time. The story exemplifies how presentational knowing can enhance 'human connection', our capacity to communicate lived experience and to cultivate 'epistemological coherence' between feeling, thinking and acting. The aesthetic is a bridge between experiential and propositional forms of knowing, through cultivating awareness and reflexivity.

There is a fourth, compelling reason for bringing aesthetic experience into the heart of education. Human creation is always an unfinished, incomplete project, exposed to changing fortune and to multiple interpretation. A crucial theme of this book is the transformative and transcendental force of uncertainty: the aesthetic representation of human experience, of life itself, which is not meant to convey one truth, or fixed meaning. Good art is open, enabling stories to move on, to generate other stories. Art works to keep the conversation going. Form, then, is always a *mise-en-forme*, a shaping, an enactment of meaning through narration, metaphor, image and gesture. Complex objects and observers are not trivial machines. Each (re)presentation can be dis-played, re-edited, con-fronted, ex-changed, trans-formed, re-interrogated, if we maintain awareness of its changeable truth. So, aesthetic practices remind us that dreams are the stuff we are made of, open to endless interpretation but providing the most powerful of insights.

As Leavy (2015) suggested, form shapes content as well as displays it. Art is performative and presentational. If, as we have argued, content is primarily perceived and interpreted through the impact of its material appearance on our senses and souls, we have a responsibility to be constantly aware of the work we do, in the company of diverse others. We insist that 'reasons of the heart' be (re)integrated to preserve our ecology of life. We integrate into our theories and practices the role of doing and contemplating art, and cultivating insightful, playful, and generative orientations. Art is always there, even when unrecognised or denied. Imagining, dreaming, creating are what people do, what we do, when trying to heal our fractures and pain, and to learn

what is relevant, as well as to build hope. This lies at the heart of a truly human project of lifelong learning and adult education. We are now prepared for the concluding part of our pilgrimage, its final chapter, at least for now. The focus is on the big questions of human life: of ecstasy, joy, love, transcendence, loss, betrayal, power and impotence, pain, separation, disappointment, and finally death, as perhaps an ultimate form of transformation. We might find some answers in the creative power of myth, ritual, and the spiritual quest.

10

The Spirit of Transformation

Slippery and Illusive Territory

In our final chapter we engage with the role of spirituality, the sacred and religion in the transformation of perspectives and lives. We explore mythos, ritual, and wisdom as responses to questions that seem illusive to rationality's gaze. But we also enter a cautionary note, for the reader, and for ourselves, since the terrain is slippery, illusive and contentious. Words fail or fall short, 'For fools rush in where angels fear to tread': a verse from Alexander Pope that inspired the title of the Batesons' book—father and daughter—on the epistemology of the sacred (Bateson and Bateson 1987). In idiomatic English, the verse is used to caution inexperienced people against attempting what the more experienced might avoid. So, we hesitate: we are educators, psychotherapists and researchers, not theologians. But we also think that the marginalisation of the spiritual and transcendent, as well as the idea of the sacred, from discourses of adult education and transformation, leaves a troubling vacuum. One greatly weakening our potential repertoire as educators and researchers.

We have been aware throughout this pilgrimage of the inevitable limits to human knowledge, when framed through the perspectives of reason alone. We have addressed disconnections, dualisms, and tensions that characterize adult education as well as the wider human condition. We have argued for a larger, more inclusive and 'holistic' sensibility, at many moments, where diverse ways of seeing and acting can dynamically and creatively co-exist, if in tension. We place inverted commas around 'holistic' because we are concerned that this word, too, like transformation and transformative learning, is in danger of becoming cliché, meaning all things to all people; a premature signifier of what is supposedly good and desirable yet devoid of meaning. Holism can be used to blur difference and avoid thinking about what is meant by interactions within systems, of which we are only a part, like our world's ecology. Or the word is used to disguise difference and difficulty. We want to celebrate the notion that difference is part of being human, and that dialogue is fundamental to learning within it, and to notions of transcendence.

We have explored words like connectedness, and learning, as a work of composition, a weaving together of fragments of experience into something larger: a narrative form redolent with meaning. But our words fall short when seeking to bring the argument to a climax, or to some satisfactory if inevitably provisional closure. There is tension in what we seek to do: to write of the numinous, the ineffable, or the mystery of curiosity and struggles to learn; and of the faith necessary to create meaning, insight and agency in and from experience. Lifelong learning is too frequently ontologically sanitised as well as instrumentalised, to the neglect of the whole human subjects at its core.

Philosophical and spiritual paths have of course been followed by people and communities across time and geographical space. They have sought answers, in different ways, to the need for meaning, and for bonds that celebrate and foster belonging, trust, hope, and care for human fears and limits. This goes beyond materiality, or the land of facts; or even the spiritual, in some of its more super-natural manifestations. Maybe the dualism separating the material and spiritual needs to be overcome. What might then be the contribution of spirituality, the sacred, and even religion to understanding, and generating satisfying

stories of significant learning? Experience of the sacred, of symbolic practices, and embodied rituals, and even encounters with the numinous, matter in many people's life narratives. The role of religion, and its relationship to the sacred and the spiritual, as well as to the mystical, has been powerful. Religion appears in many guises, including the secular—arguably under the banner of communism, fascism, a-theism, or even consumerism—and yet, despite the promises of secularism, and the Enlightenment god of reason, religion itself has not withered and died, despite its frequent tendencies towards fundamentalism, or anti-learning. But such tendencies can be shared by atheists and humanists alike (see Carroll and Norman 2017).

Our framing of the role of the spiritual and religious is informed by Laura's systemic perspective and Linden's psychoanalytic ideas: they invite us, in different ways, to cultivate perpetual curiosity about experience, forged in dialogue and relationship, where metaphor and story excite and illuminate the depths of who we are. It is an auto/biographical project in these terms; in the final resort it could be about the place and importance of love, hope as well as despair and hate in our learning lives, individually, relationally, as well as socially. But love matters, maybe most of all. Terry Eagleton (2009) quotes Kierkegaard in *The Sickness unto Death*, that a believer is someone in love. It is the same with knowing: because a woman, like Laura, takes a passionate interest in women's liberation, and struggles around this, in her own life, and through this begins to understand more profoundly how patriarchy functions. This has happened in our book, which is an ongoing, loving dialogue and passionate engagement with our subject. We must love the possibility of something bigger and better when engaging with our objects of enquiry.

Religious Saints maintained that we must love things (and maybe ourselves?) before we can know them, because it is only through our attraction to them that we come to know more fully. Faith enters the equation because all of us, including the scientist and materialist, use faith's energy to sustain the quest for understanding or establishing causalities; theirs too is a kind of pilgrimage. Transformation, even in the academy, requires faith in the possibility of illuminating a truth or in developing deeper understanding, even when driven by postmodern

scepticism. There is a kind of faith at work in the latter, albeit wrapped in the language of scepticism towards meta-narratives. The desire for truth, albeit always and inevitably relative, and constrained by discourses, shapes all our perspectives, even when we consider truth itself to be a modernist illusion.

As intellectuals, we are trained or encouraged to avoid words like truth. When we have used love, hope, or wisdom as key words in our ESREA Life History and Biography Conferences, some colleagues have reacted with astonishment and criticism. This is not properly scientific, they say, or it is a kind of therapy, they insist, rather than the rational pursuit of truth, or good enough empirical research, on which collective credibility depends. On the contrary, we suggest, there is the grave risk of losing relevant and potentially rich ways of knowing, in the evocative if ambiguous realm of mythos. Narrative, poetry, and art go beyond the logic of evidence into a qualitatively different yet important domain. They can be used to re-define evidence as a 'phenomenological truth' (Laing 1967). We can feel stranded in postmodern, post-structuralist scepticism, and even in a dehumanised, overly cerebral and anesthetised criticality. Love matters in our formation, and maybe transformation—when a good enough other comes alongside; someone or something celebrating or legitimising our existence, which in turn enables us to feel seen, welcomed and curious about the world. Someone or something which cultivates desire. Someone or something which, maybe, helps us defy the potential formlessness and alienation of liquid modernity.

So, this chapter is challenging, for both of us, in different ways. We dialogue across its pages, trying to connect spirituality with critical and political thinking, as well as logos, on the one hand; and the latter with the imagination and mythos, on the other; and to consider transformative experience alongside religious understanding of encounters with the divine, including metaphorically. We finally disclaim the tendency to separate transcendence from immanence, matter from spirit, seeing these as intimately interwoven dimensions or dynamic prerequisites of transformation. Transcendence requires material to engage with, an immanent context for its realisation: like a workers' tutorial class, perhaps, or Freirean inspired group which becomes aware that oppression is often cultural and material, rather than 'natural' and inevitable.

The Power of Myth, and Ambivalence Towards Religion

Tension, pain, anxiety and frustration as well as joy, enchantment, satisfaction and a kind of creative ecstasy are important in learning of a lifewide, lifelong kind. We do not find satisfying answers to pain and suffering, or joy, in human experience in a simple click of a mouse, or brief excursion to a google website. The process is deeper and more challenging: the whole is more than the sum of the parts when we play with different perspectives. Especially, following Socrates, when we remain open to our ignorance, folly and hubris, as well as compassionate to ourselves and others, in the limits of our understanding. Seeing the humanity of the other and understanding that they too strive for truth while riddled with doubt. This can apply to those of a religious sensibility as much as to the humanist. There is no simple binary divide between faith and faithlessness, between conviction and scepticism, among the religious or non-believers. In this sense, we are all seekers after meaning. We are challenging either/or dichotomies, even when there is tension, for academics, in recognising reason's limits (which the academy does not like), or in opening a space of curiosity towards the spiritual and mythos. Science, or scientism, perhaps, has given overwhelming primacy to reason, and has refused, at times, to place a limit on what reasoned human understanding, or a rational education, can achieve. This reaches back to Plato and the association of our own reason with the divine controlling source of knowledge. Honing our rational powers brings us close to God (Hobbs 2017). On the other hand, we can be seduced by mysticism, by a premature closure of thought, or by the power of a myth or belief, that proves illusory or even dangerous.

Logos, Mythos and Religion

It is important to recall, at this point, the Greek distinction between logos and mythos. The Greeks believed they co-existed, without needing war, or walls built between them. We suggest, like the Greeks, that

mythos can help us to expand our troubling attempts at lifelong learning in spiritually enhancing, even transformational ways. We acknowledge tensions within, and between us, about aspects of mythos, not least when meaning and insight become solidified into what can seem to be the false certainties and inflexibility of formal religion. Religion, and spiritual practices, can serve as an avoidance of difficult thinking, a closure, a final answer, an end to curiosity, an escape from the reality principle into a false Oceanic bliss, as Freud described it.

There can be ambivalence even dismissiveness towards religious perspectives among radical writers on transformative learning and adult education. In some readings of Paulo Freire, for instance, there is little or no reference to the influence of liberation theology in his pedagogy (Kirkwood 2017). Opposition to religious belief partly explains the scepticism towards Tawney's Christian Socialism and the idea of the Kingdom socially incarnated in the good adult class: a sceptical Marxist materialism took over, at least for a while, in some of the British adult education literature. Profounder forms of critical learning or movement from false to truer consciousness was the prime key to progress. Still is, for many. Consciousness of the alienating material realities of ordinary people's struggle to make a living, forced as they have been to sell their labour cheaply while losing control of time, craft and dignity. Argument has raged over the extent to which cultural life, including adult education, was determined by economic relationships or had the potential to transcend these. Aspects of workers education in the United Kingdom, including the tutorial classes inspired by Tawney, were said to have tamed students' potential proletarian radicalism, incorporating them into a kind of neutered national consensus. Interestingly, in the history of workers' education, dialogue broke down between some of those holding differing perspectives, in what the historian Jonathan Rose (2010) called 'the whole contention concerning the Workers' Education Association' (pp. 256–297). For some historians, opposition to the Church, any church, was fuelled by the latter's role in schooling and its disciplining of the troublesome masses on behalf of the masters. Building criticality was part of the struggle to interpret and eventually overthrow capitalism, because of its degradation of humanity. However, we wonder, time and again, whether criticality is sufficient to sustain

and enliven curiosity about experience in its messiness and disillusion, including in the struggle for a more equitable and humane social order.

Laura's ambivalence towards religion is strong. She grew up in a Catholic country and experienced religion's patriarchal power to colonise thought worlds and bodies, and to use blame and shame for 'educational' purposes. All infused by the fear of ultimate punishment and inescapable infernos if the right path was not taken. God as omnipresent, omniscient and male, teaching women to feel badly about their sinful bodies, always reminding them that it was she, after all, and her weakness in the Garden of Eden, that was responsible for *mankind's* fall. She, as the other, corrupt and corrupting, needing containment and discipline. The common-sense idea of sin and punishment entails no compassion for human error. It has created joylessness and incuriosity, alongside control and discipline, in Laura's experience of both public and Catholic schools.

For Linden, there is ambivalence and anxiety about the conservatism of the Church in England and its alliance with the State, as well as, too often, with the rich and powerful. This, despite Christianity's roots in a theology of the divine in ordinariness, and of solidarity with the poor and love for the outcast and despised. The problem no doubt, historically, stems from the Emperor Constantine's Nicene council, where Christianity became the religion of the State. Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God the care of our souls, became muddled. There is also for Linden, like Laura, anger at religious zealots obsessed with sexuality, who rage against the Queer other, as they project their own deep-seated anxieties into otherness. (And of course, this is not only about 'sex', it is the fear of dis-order and of messiness that can drive the political zealot.) People however who represent institutional power often neglect one central imperative in the New Testament—to love one another in a spirit of solidarity and magnanimity. It is the Mary Magdalenes of the world who get pushed to the margins, rather than members of the world's Sanhedrins, or the Caesars, and maybe many male theologians.

And yet, religious and especially spiritual perspectives are not easily expunged from a theory of human learning; they are present everywhere, even in our book, if not always explicit. Our ambivalence creates

generative possibility: it helps keep open a double description, and seek a more encompassing perspective, to overcome the dangers of dualistic thinking. We have noted the dialogue between Dante and Jung, in Chapter 6. And the idea that we are all riddled with doubt as well as the possibility or some faith, of whatever kind. Bateson thought the sacred was a manifestation of the pattern which connects (Bateson and Bateson 1987), and he writes about 'conversion'—radical perspective transformation—in his discussion of Learning III. Religious understanding of transformation, in diverse traditions, is about finding meaning, ecstasy, pain, and the capacity for subjective transcendence in crises; and of a living relationship with the divine, or 'god', whoever she is. Transcendence can inspire us towards the good, beyond our own existence, and to acknowledge a common humanity and the need for solidarity with the poor. It can be forged in a dialogue like ours, where new possibilities open, for ourselves and, maybe, for you as our reader. We have the metaphor, and auto/biographies of pilgrimage to draw on to serve as an allegory of a lifetime's learning. The seventeenth century English poet, Abraham Cowley wrote that 'Curiosity does, no less than devotion, pilgrims make'. In Linden's case, there is an insatiable curiosity towards the symbolism of Christian sacrifice, and of solidarity with those crucified alongside us; and of forgiveness for those who drive nails into our hearts. New life and compassion can be found on pilgrimages, like Dante's imaginal journey, drawing, inter alia, on the Christ figure, Beatrice, Mary and Virgil. Good inspirational objects, in psychoanalytic language, to nourish an inner journey.

For Linden, religion is too implicated in his story to be omitted, although he often does so in his writing. It is a way of being in the world that helps make sense of life and to articulate the deepest of emotions. Above all, it is about a relationship and an openness to continued possibility; in effect, more of an existential commitment than the acceptance of a given set of supposed religious 'facts' (Carroll and Norman 2017). For Laura, its place is marginal in her life, after adolescent struggles to find a more spiritual way. But we have both stood in front of the church in the small village near Milan, where Laura lives, and talked of the symbolic power of the mass, especially when unencumbered by theological excess. As with all rituals, it can work as a

metaphor of transformation, of digesting something of the divine in everyday objects. We have talked of the loss of shared rituals at times of change and transition, at births, weddings, and funerals, where there can be avoidance of giving offence, or crass commercialism. We have been left feeling dissatisfied, sick and empty. On the other hand, a humanist funeral service, as Richard Norman notes, can be deeply satisfying and spiritual, in celebrating how a person has contributed to others and the social good. And where members of a congregation are invited to express their feelings—in poetry, literature, a thought or anecdote—as part of bearing witness to a life (Carroll and Norman 2017).

But Linden's memory is also of a soulless municipal crematorium, where the death of a father and mother seemed bound into the logic of industrial production, with the next set of mourners waiting outside, and an allowance of 15 minutes to say goodbye. Linden loves the rituals of the Church, and the sense of mystery, magic, awe and time at the heart of the sacraments, including the spirit of the Anglo-Catholic service. The symbols of transformation, the mythos of the mass and of resurrection, can be dismissed as non-sense, or as a mythic, symbolic glimpse of life renewed. There can be a profound humanity at the heart of this, as there can be in a humanist funeral. This is a place where dialogue across difference is fruitful.

Writing like this feels, to me, Linden, like coming out, because the academy often considers such matters as purely private even supernatural affairs. Materiality rules, as does homo economicus in various accounts of how things work or of the possibilities for radical change. People are driven by greed, narrow self-interest and material desire, so apologists for capitalism argue, which in turn drives economic growth. In Marxist terms, religion is most often the great opiate and distraction. In Marx's vision of Communism, however, technological innovation brought abundance for all, and the fruits of the earth could be shared equitably, according to need. Human beings would only have to labour in the morning, and only then to fulfil necessary tasks. Other times were for family, fishing, reading, and for rest and conviviality. Strange to observe that Marx's communist utopian vision appears to celebrate a spirituality alongside social and economic transformation.

Linden has suggested, too, in Chapters 5 and 8, that a spiritual and religious sensibility—seeing the image of the sacred and divine in ordinary people—has played an important role in struggles for a socially just order. Paulo Freire was inspired in this way (Kirkwood 2017), as was Tawney. Both were grounded in a spirit of equality between everyone, and in the importance of nurturing dialogue, openness, curiosity, respectfulness and love, as well as the possibility of transcendence in democratic well-being. The same applies in the work of the Italian educator Capitini. In such a context, psychoanalysis can seem a hard-edged rationalist enclave, but there are constant efforts to reclaim the divine and transcendent there too (Sayers 2003). Freud himself used myth, story and literature, almost despite himself and his claims to be a good rational empiricist (Symington 1986; Allison 2017). Just occasionally, he used the word love (Honneth 2009). In Jung, such sentiment was stronger, as was the importance of transformation in the soul's difficult pilgrimage through life and death.

So, we need an open dialogue about how mythos can open new windows on the auto/biographical, cultural, epistemological, therapeutic, and political spirit of learning. In their book *Re-enchanting the Academy*, Angela Voss and Simon Wilson (2017), juxtapose the spiritual and sacred, and education, against an extreme scientific materialism and rational empiricism dominating the academy. They encourage openness to ancient as well as contemporary images and intuitions of how the world works and selves within it. They call this mythopoetic soul work. Their aspiration echoes Terry Eagleton's (2009) rejoinder to the arch rationalists Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, who equate religion with pseudo-science. On the contrary, Eagleton insists, it does not claim to be science but rather a search for meaning and justice nurtured by the power of love. Karen Armstrong (2009) observes that when Freud and Jung started to chart their scientific search for psyche or soul, they both turned to ancient myths and stories for help. We should remember that myth, or mythos, was never intended to be an accurate historical account of events, but rather a way to grasp the complexity and mystery of human existence and of learning, as in Bateson's 'thinking in terms of stories' (1979, pp. 14–16). Something happening all the time, frequently beyond our immediate awareness. We draw on myth

when needing to illuminate the puzzles, possibilities and limitations of our lives, even to the point of death, and maybe beyond. As Carroll and Norman (2017) observe, the great stories of the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition can resonate with everyone. The Garden of Eden is a parable of shame and sexuality, while the story of Noah and the flood is one of hubris and environmental catastrophe.

However, mythos should be treated suspiciously, at times. We must cultivate the capacity for 'double' or 'multiple' description (Bateson 1979), a critical reflexivity, alongside an imaginative, heartfelt freedom. We noted in Chapter 6 how Jung's archetypes were both powerful and dangerous, in his own biography, in the seduction of the cult of the supreme leader who embodies the earthy spirit of a whole people; as in Nazism. Linden notes (West 2016) how Islamist radicalizers target young people with powerful myths. A myth about Bosnia has been central to radicalization, providing a compelling story of the West's hostility towards Islam. The 'Christian world' conspired against brother Muslims in Bosnia, who were white, but they were nonetheless slaughtered, as the West stood by at Srebrenica. Radicalisation works by emotional, imaginative and mythic appeal to the past constructed in the light of the present, and to the present in the gaze of the past. Jihad becomes a heavy responsibility requiring toughness, even brutality. The victory of the Muslim armies, over the King of Jerusalem, Guy of Lusignan in the twelfth century Battle of Hattin, is interpreted as an outcome of a long process of small-scale, hard-hitting battles against a powerful, militarily superior enemy. Past struggles are reinterpreted in the light of the present for what is said to be needed against the new crusaders of the West and its client states. Muslim clerics may speak in the language of theory; the jihadi groups act through mythic stories and doing (Hassan and Weiss 2015). We need critical reflexivity to balance the seductions of the theatre of myth and the objectification of others.

Ironically, in the Bosnian conflict, the use of historical trauma and resistance, in mythologised form, was potent for the other side too. Milosevic, the Serbian leader, used stories about the slaughter of many of his people and the alleged murder of King Lazar by Ottoman Muslims in the Battle of Ksovo Polje, to 'explain' present miseries and justify terrible actions against Muslims. This is a narrative of

humiliation that had to be avenged. Actual events were different but myths of the murderous, threatening other play into individual and collective psyches, fuelling hate and the need to annihilate (Varvin 2012; West 2016). Voss and Wilson (2017) suggest that the academy can offer a precious gift of antidote: the cultivation of critical reflexivity as part of a search for meaning, which includes understanding our own conceits as well as of those across a wide historical canvas. New age counter-cultures and their intoxication with enchantment, for example, take us only so far: critical voices within and without need space too.

Spirituality and Sacredness Beyond Religion

What place then, if any, for notions of the sacred in transformative experience? The sacred as mystery, requiring respect, awe but also representing a potential power in struggles against barbarism. Picasso's *Guernica* is sacred in such terms, including the image of the suffering woman at its heart. The Goddess of ancient times is brought firmly down to earth in the savage destruction of the city, by the products of science. The alliance between science and power can bring us to perpetual destruction, especially when nothing is sacred (Bateson and Bateson 1987). But can there be any shared criteria to illuminate the elusive concept of the sacred, beyond formal religious understanding? And what kind of knowledge can we now jointly create, in dialogue, on the theme of the sacred in transformative learning?

In her 2003 ground-breaking book on spirituality and culture, one inspiring our present chapter, Libby Tisdell wrote: 'if one wants to educate, it is incumbent upon educators to examine the variety of ways in which people construct knowledge' (p. xi). Breaking a silence on the sacred, on spirituality and religion, means listening to other voices from 'different cultural, class, and gender communities, recognizing the knowledge that is present in those communities' (p. 8); and, we suggest, by recognising silenced stories within ourselves and learning biographies. Like the play of free association in the psychoanalytic hour, we must search for greater openness with reference to our desire, demons, dreads and conceits.

Tisdell was assuming, in her research, that the sacred and spirituality are bigger than religion, if we define them as the awareness and capacity to honour interconnectedness and mystery in life. They entail making meaning and transformation as a movement 'toward greater authenticity or to a more authentic self' (p. xi). A profound learning process of widening definition and perspective is a consequence of better knowledge and intuitions of the processes of 'moving forward and spiralling back'. Of the non-linearity of learning journeys, as the present recreates or mingles with the past, in midlife, for instance, where time begins to feel scarce and we might wonder as to what we have achieved, existentially. Or in illness, when we feel vulnerable and where there can be intimations of our own death; or in the loss of loved ones. These moments represent, for many, acute times of questioning, doubt, and evoke the imperative to create meaning, or find a narrative thread to guide us through existential labyrinths. It is about being and becoming more fully human. We appear to need experiences of birth and death, of loss and displacement, and of worries about those we love, to act as triggers to engage with the big questions of life and learning.

Breaking the silence on spirituality means re-integrating the multiplicity of forms that knowledge can take in our theories of learning and education. And by integrating art, ritual, dream, music, metaphor and diverse symbols into our work. Maybe writing itself—a theme of our final metalogue—is part of breaking free of logos' grip, by bringing literature, poetry and other literary forms, alongside art, into play. To embrace the spirit of poets and novelists, while respecting the discipline logos brings. Many researchers in interpretative and qualitative studies bring narrative and creative sensibilities, auto-ethnographic imaginations and artistic knowledge into the academic frame (Bochner 2013; Chang and Boyd 2011). Qualitative research, in many forms, illuminates and interrogates dominant discourses—scientific as well as moral, political and religious—and 'seeks to ground the self in a sense of the sacred, to connect the ethical, respectful self dialogically to nature and the worldly environment' (Lincoln and Denzin 2000, p. 1052). Complexity then re-enters this portrait of self in relation. An image of a golden thread helps too in weaving together knowledge of ourselves, unconscious life, and the other, and what she represents, as well as to

appreciate the wisdom of nature. This resonates with Bateson's idea of the sacred as a celebration of wholeness (Bateson and Bateson 1987). Something not excluding science, mathematics, technology, or conscious purpose, but woven together with aesthetics and ethics, the unconscious and narrative imagination. Besides, an epistemology of the sacred recovers values and insights lost in the Enlightenment project's embrace of positivism: if all humans are sacred, worthy of recognition and respect, then it is easier to compose a universal human ethic emphasising a common sacredness, and the unacceptability of oppression, whatever hideous or disguised shape it takes. And to celebrate the possibility of many truths, which are silenced in evidence-based mantras. 'This sacred epistemology interrogates the ways in which race, class, and gender operate as important systems of oppression in the world today' (Lincoln and Denzin 2000, p. 1052). The sacred provides the groundswell for a celebration of a universal commitment to lifelong learning, to social justice, and to the quest for a well-lived life.

Bateson thought that ritual and metaphor (not only individually, but collectively) enhance our sense of the sacred and the *sacramentality* of gesture and context markers. Rituals and metaphors can heal the splits that open between mind and nature, because they convey profounder information that cannot be communicated in words. This is information and meaning beyond formal 'evidence'. Presentational knowledge and forms of enactment can liberate our complex, lifelong struggle to understand, not least ourselves. What does it mean when Lake Eerie is poisoned and for our psyches to be poisoned too? What is lost and murdered in the process? What does it mean for species to be annihilated or for a rain forest to be desecrated? A sense of tragedy, but also of awe, mystery, transcendence can be evoked by authentic participation in enactments, rituals and ceremonies of resistance. These are not optional extras, but fundamental necessities in struggles to protect fragile ecologies. We need myths to teach of humility, and our place in the sacredness of a fragile earth. Noah, in the Biblical story, was pilloried for his warnings about environment catastrophe, only to be proven wise. Myth and ritual can inspire us to action, and keep us keeping on when everything seems hopeless, and others are contemptuous of our actions.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage became for us a powerful metaphor of processes of transformation, and, we suggest, of lifelong learning. Libby Tisdell (2017) has written of her pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago, the Way of Saint James, towards Santiago de Compostela, after a difficult and deeply painful divorce. There is a literal movement of self, serving as a microcosm of a whole life, as she kept a journal on moving in and across various spaces. There were poetic and what seemed sacred moments of turning towards the light, looking at a sunflower doing the same; and of experiencing the pain and rawness of blisters, and learning to live with this. She would pick up her mat and walk; blessing her feet in the process; 'and finally it was the beauty of the sunflowers, or the bounty of the vineyards, the welcome presence of the waters of *'una fuente'* (a fountain), or of other blessings on the way. That was the cycle, from the pain to the blessing; and then onward, making my way by walking. I followed an invisible thread to the Sacred Source that helped me manage the pain. What a miracle!', she wrote (Tisdell 2017, p. 346) . There was group singing that wove connections to her Catholic, Irish roots. There were Irish folks singing with her and, in such moments, it was difficult to separate the religious from the cultural and spiritual.

She wrote that she was more of the Irish Catholic than she realised or cared to admit. She summarised diverse insights from her pilgrimage: the spiritual and cultural importance of reframing connections to images, like the crucifixion; the physical, embodied dimensions of movement; the realisation that there was a thread to guide her in the labyrinth. It included new forms and life in old phrases re-born, like taking up one's mat and walking. These can feel meaningless at other times but pregnant with significance on pilgrimage. The pilgrim must listen to her body: pain is to be engaged with and tended to; and there must be awareness of limitation. Not everything can be done, and time is finite. There are frequent encounters with the labyrinth, and the risk of losing oneself, but also of a thread to guide the pilgrim on, and a faith in the life enhancing qualities of the experience; of how the sacred is glimpsed in a flower as well as the rhythms and textures of music and

outpourings of joy. The unconscious can burst into life, in dream and even day dreaming: of letting Dante and other good objects enter our souls and enrich our faith in the journey.

Tisdell writes of longing in the call to pilgrimage and of departure; of moving into new ways of being. Of being care-full in her journaling and subsequent writing. But her account raises many questions too: might her perspective be overly optimistic, and even, dare we say, characteristically North American in its evocation of progress? After all, the founding of the United States derived from the pilgrimage of a set of patriarchs fleeing European tyranny and religious hierarchy, and supposedly moving towards tolerance, constitutional government, and freedom of religion and conscience, or so the story goes. Of course, the account omits the genocide committed against First Nation peoples. However, to frame Libby's testimony in this way is ungenerous, because she, we, inevitably, write from within a culture; and, in her case, she explicitly acknowledges the importance of learning from, rather than annihilating the other. Maybe European academic cultures are too weighed down by historical pessimism, and visceral memories of our capacity to destroy others on an industrial scale. We are more suspicious, or some of us are, of religious sensibilities, because of the damage they have done, to women as well as men, in places like Italy.

I have been a pilgrim, Linden writes, going solo and yet finding the company of friends. I was walking on the French side of the same Camino, the Chemin de Saint Jacques, starting at the old pilgrim gathering point at Le Puy-en-Velay in the Massif Central. I walked over three weeks to the Abbey de St. Foy, for the Festival of St. James on July 24th. The journey across the testing terrain of the Massif Central was hard, with many blisters, and doubts, interspersed with moments of ecstasy. There was danger, intimations of mortality, when lost and stumbling towards a cliff edge, in the dark, one evening. I learned that to cover delicate, blistered feet with layers of sock was the wrong answer; as was diving into cold water, only to aggravate the pain further. Logos as well as mythos was required for the journey.

Small moments brought joy and glimpses of the sacred. Like finding a way down a mountainside, despite the blisters, which often hurt more when going downhill. One path was shrouded by trees, and there was

no light in what seemed to be like a dark, Gothic cathedral nave. Then a pinprick of light appeared, eventually becoming fulsome and eventually appearing as the glistening white Abbey de St. Foy perched on the mountainside, shining in evening sunshine. (Sainte Foy was a 12-year-old girl, martyred in the fourth century, and who, it was claimed, could a source of healing for the pilgrim.) As I wove my way towards the Abbey, someone was playing Bach on a piano, in a cottage, opposite the path. A window was open, so the music could be clearly heard. Tears of joy flowed in a moment of healing and a glimpse, maybe, of the divine.

Earlier I met an older man called Richard, at the door of a small remote church dedicated to Saint Pierre. The church had a much celebrated eighth century Carolingian alter. Richard had walked from the old German Democratic Republic travelling nearly 2000 kilometres across the Alps to see this: his journey was made only a few years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and I think he relished the new freedoms of travel. But there was a notice on the church's locked door, written in French, which he could not translate. It stated that the buzzer should be pressed three times, for so many seconds, and then to push the door open. He had been there for hours, trying to understand. I said Bonjour, and he asked if I understood English and French. The joy on his face was uncontainable when I said yes, and we were able to decipher the notice and share together the ancient beauty of the church alter. Afterwards we told stories of our pilgrimage and lives. Later, he was ill, and rested at a gîte d'étap—a rest house on the route—as I went on my way, because of time. There were glimpses of beauty, faith, love and even healing, as well as vulnerability, in those moments of connection.

The experience of pilgrimage is like a calling, a quest, one that may be personal but also collective. It can be political too, as witnessed in Chapter 8, with reference to the Peace March of Assisi. You can go solo yet find good company, and the rhythms of walking are more attuned with a potential for deeper forms of conversation and connectedness, not least with oneself. Pilgrimage is about having a goal, dealing with a life crisis, and having sufficient faith that something can be resolved, in its own time. Linden, like Libby, was wrestling with disorientation and the deepest of dilemmas, in his case the threat to a new job at a

university in Canterbury; and the pain of separation from children in his move from Oxford where they continued to live, after a searingly difficult divorce. But the pilgrimage was not enough, and he was soon sucked back into the tensions of the day job. It needed more time. Like 25 years, as the first draft of this chapter was completed, close by the Chemin de St. Jacques, in Languedoc Roussillon. It is in writing that we can compose more of a whole: a pilgrimage becomes a fragment of a larger, lifelong, liberating if never complete process; a quest for meaning, truth, beauty, integration, individuation, critical wisdom, healing, openness as well as generosity of spirit.

Big Questions and the Transcendence of Ego

The spiritual perspective on transformation raises big questions that every human being, and culture, asks, consciously and unconsciously, in varying ways. Does life have meaning? Why is there suffering and death? How can we pursue happiness? What is the 'good enough' life? Why do events so often feel beyond our control? And what of hate as well as love in our relationships? When we become more reflexive about our humanity, we are forced to face our shadows, and the pervasiveness of evil and pain, in every day experience. There is hate, violence, and destructiveness, at all levels of micro, meso, and macro worlds. It is to be faced not avoided. The trigger towards awareness and greater reflexivity lies in darkness: of divorce, loss, illness, and the disorientating dilemmas these provoke. But it can lead to learning of a higher order, or deeper quality of transformation. Some might call this level 'conversion', an 'awakening' (in Buddhism, the 'bodhi', or knowledge of the true nature of things) or Learning 3 in Bateson's classification.

Deeper learning seems to entail re-organisation of the relationship between us and the world, and with the people and objects with whom we interact. Overcoming the idea of a separate, autonomous, self-determined, over essentialised 'I'. For Westerners, maybe more widely, it must involve some transcendence of Ego, letting go, at least for a while, of our narcissism and tendency toward manipulating people and objects for our own ends. We are talking here of a quality of learning that

includes deep epistemological revision and even soulfulness. It is intellectual, emotional, practical, material and spiritual at one and the same time.

Jung's notion of soul (see Chapter 6) was bigger than the self, containing within itself a larger system. It encompassed the unconscious as well as encounters with the divine. Soul work is a practice: it entails enacting and expressing something that is not (only) I, but is still real and can lead, maybe, to encounters with God. But Jung's God is not 'up there in the skies' nor 'down here on earth'. Not outside, nor inside us. The divine is within anything that disturbs and calls us to be more than we are. During an interview, a few days before he died, Jung said:

> To this day God is the name by which I designate all things which cross my willful path violently and recklessly, all things which upset my subjective views, plans and intentions and change the course of my life for better or worse. (Jung, quoted in Edinger 1974, p. 101)

Our willful path is governed by conscious purpose, but we must admit, at times, that we have little or no control of the complexities of our life. Like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, we become free of our burdens when we abandon conscious thinking and can bless life and beauty. So, the image of God, as a collective archetype (Jung 1963), can work as a reminder of our limits and the need to accept them, to surrender, to find rest. The representation of God—in those religions that allow it (interestingly, many religions are iconoclastic)—is too often deceptive, narrow and over-determined. A projection of all we want him or her to be; the giver of gifts or recourse of last resort, who should answer our prayerful demands. But how can this old man with a beard, symbolising the Father, speak to women or indigenous people, or to those who grew up without a father or did so with one who was violent? An image that fails to fulfil our need for life enhancing symbols has to be re-imagined, because, for some or many, it does not work.

Jung (1916) claims that another human being, or group, can stand for our soul image, and have a role in our path of learning beyond Ego. Sabina Spielrein, it seems, fulfilled this function for Jung. Bateson touched on this kind of fundamental learning in a famous chapter on

alcoholism (1972, pp. 309–337), encompassing the idea of 'hitting bottom', and feeling panic but then discovering and surrendering to a 'Power greater than the self' (p. 331). We might call it God, Nature, or History but it is a sacred moment, when we learn to surrender. The theologian and former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, suggests, from a different perspective to Bateson, that the universe exists because of some prior independent agency, which can, in certain instances, be called intelligent, and can be drawn on in the darkest of times (Tallis and Williams 2017). The belief system is different but the process similar.

Bateson thought the process of becoming (ontogenetic), and what and how we know (our epistemology) are profoundly interconnected; hence, a change in fundamental premises, 'those premises that are more deeply embedded in the mind […] and the less susceptible to change' (p. 336), become an ontological/epistemological change affecting the whole universe of a person. 'If we deeply and even unconsciously believe that our relation to the larger system […] is symmetrical and emulative, then we are in error.' (p. 336). This is not simply the error of the alcoholic, in her everyday struggle for control, but a wider contemporary one. Culturally speaking, there is a dominant metaphor of control and conscious purpose, even to the point of ecological abuse. It has to do with being in thrall, addicted, stuck, and omnipotent while needing to escape from the tyranny. Surrendering is a requirement for mental health: Bateson analysed the 12 steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous project: to be able to manage one's addiction, it must be recognised, we must admit vulnerability, and accept a greater power. Philosophical and spiritual leaders have often articulated a language of meaning, belonging, trust, and hope amidst the fears, limits, and defeats of life. Experiencing the sacred, and encounters with the numinous, in many people's stories, relate to acknowledging our vulnerability, and yet finding power, glimpses of truth and ethical commitment too. These elements can constitute moments of existential, embodied as well as relational transformation. But for some feelings of emptiness or of the void can remain. Samuel Beckett enigmatically reminds of this, and how words so often fail. Yet even Beckett, the poet of meaninglessness never entirely gave up on faith, however faint, and his writing represents a qualified transcendence, in dialogue with Dante.

Mythology and the Origins of Fear

We seem overwhelmed by the fear of fear and anxiety, at times. It is unsurprising if we analyse the roots of culture and civilization, at least in Europe: the foundational myths of Western civilization depict life as a traumatic process, pregnant with discontents. The Swiss German psychoanalyst Franz Renggli writes in his book *The Origin of Anxiety* (2001), that Mesopotamic myths told of birth as separation, and the prototype of all struggles in human life. Renggli makes an initially strange observation that as apes, we 'expect' to be able to grasp our mother's fur, and hold on to her body, to be sure not to lose contact; we are born with that instinct in our hands and arms. But the human mother does not have fur, so it is up to her to hold her baby. This story celebrates the mother's (or carer's) capacity for holding, also profoundly and poetically described by Winnicott (1971). Our dependence on the other is absolute, and we maintain this deeply experiential, embodied knowledge for the whole of our lives, mostly unconsciously, since education teaches us that we *must* be autonomous. Western education focuses on enhancing autonomy, at all ages, in all conditions, at all costs. Dependence is constructed, psychologically and culturally, among the most feared of experiences, and negatively evaluated in a culture often celebrating the 'self-made, self-standing, self-realising' person or more often 'man'.

Renggli's narrative is fascinating. Historically and symbolically, he says, fear was fuelled, and became a major affair, when civilization aborted nomadism. Nomad mothers, in fact, carry their babies with them, in strict contact with their own body, everywhere, always, day and night: it is too dangerous to leave the baby alone, in the wild. When huts and villages, and cities, are built, this is a further step towards separation. Babies no longer need to be transported, and they become a burden, since different kinds of work are required in farming. Babies can then be left alone, and for longer than should be expected. The experience of separation nurtures fear and rage, desperation and anger, as a healthy protection for the baby from being hurt and wounded. These emotions fuel psychic development and awareness, but separation, as Freud taught, is potentially destructive, discolouring a whole life. Separating, in good enough ways, is part of lifelong learning.

There is historical evidence of the moment in history when fear became a fuel—maybe the most effective fuel—for civilization. The first Suma songs, in fact, describe crying babies, and distressed parents who do not know how to calm them; even the Gods, they sing, are shaken by their fear and tears. Mesopotamic songs, myths, and art suggest the constant danger of impending death, in the new born. The goddess/demon Lamashtu, a personification of evil and destruction, is the protagonist of many myths with her terrifying aspect, able to make fields and wombs sterile, a bearer of fever, pain, and death to the new born child as well as the adult. She especially chooses babies. For Jewish people, the demon is called Lilith. And if we follow psychoanalysis, a crying baby, externally as well as internally, is asking to be listened to, soothed, by our adult self. The baby is part of the adult, the adult is inextricably linked to the baby: fear of separation, at any stage, even in adulthood, lies barely concealed, beneath surface appearance.

Materialism and the Spiritual; or What Kind of Knowledge Are We Pursuing?

If I had been asked fifteen years ago what I understood by the word materialism, I think I should have said that materialism is a theory about the nature of the universe, and I would have accepted as a matter of course the notion that this theory is in some sense non-moral. I would have agreed that the scientist is an expert who can provide himself and others with insights and techniques, but that science could have nothing to say about whether these techniques should be used. In this, I would have been following the general trend of scientific philosophy associated with such names as Democritus, Galileo, Newton, Lavoisier, and Darwin. I would have been discarding the less respectable views of such men as Heraclitus, the alchemists, William Blake, Lamarck, and Samuel Butler. For these, the motive for scientific inquiry was the desire to build a comprehensive view of the universe which should show what Man is and how he is related to the rest of the universe. The picture which these men were trying to build was ethical and aesthetic. (Bateson 1972, p. 265)

Interestingly, the paragraph is titled *What Is Man?:* if the generalised use of the masculine is nowadays unacceptable, ironically it encourages us to ask questions about the gendered nature of the perspectives we address. Is there a feminine and masculine way, or at least symbolic tendencies, in ways of knowing and journeys to the sacred? How can we reframe the opposition of materialism and spiritualism in a way that is mutually encompassing? The feminine way has recently been explored by a colleague of ours in a book on adult teaching and learning representing a search for Sophia or the Goddess of wisdom (Fraser 2018). How might marginalised stories of the feminine divine, and of what has been dismissed as primitive, be incorporated into our own ways of seeing? The question entails engaging with our silenced or repressed psychic resources, including, in Jung's terms, anima and animus. Or we can think of what has been culturally denigrated about us, but finds expression in our dreams, creations, gestures and maybe rage. Are we able to listen to and for them? Women and indigenous voices, and even a renewed contact with traditional practices, beyond colonialist destructiveness, can act as triggers or waymarks to new openings, and even, depending on our biographies, to movement towards Catholicism, Islam, or the Buddha, or to the Mass, meditation, and pilgrimage. Or other material ways to celebrate spirituality in our lives. Materiality and spirituality are not separable in such terms: the one brings life to the other, when life is conceived as a whole.

Bateson was worried about the opposing 'insane nightmares' (Bateson and Bateson 1987) of materialism and supernaturalism. Both, in fact, pursue separation—the former, of observer and object; the latter, of creator and created—instead of searching for the connections and interdependence of mind and nature, Pleroma and Creature, humanity and god. Religion can mean confusion and hypocrisy but also serves as a royal road to transformation, when experienced afresh on pilgrimage, and when we connect with the other, or otherness, including those who have gone before.

Our whole book is a quest for a more complex, encompassing, liberally articulated perspective on learning, and the need to value embodied narrative, as well as presentational ways of knowing. We must also be careful of the danger of framing these other forms of knowing within

a rationalist perspective. It risks trivialising (von Foerster 1984) a living, complex, even mysterious system and reducing it to an observable input–output machine. Trivialisation is everywhere, in unexpected places, not least in religious institutions, in their management and commodification, as well as in education and lifelong learning (e.g. when stories are used to instruct people to follow given scripts and roles, such as be flexible in the fragile market place of liquid modernity).

There can also be the reduction of philosophy to an overly abstract academic discipline, obsessed with the meaning of disconnected fragments called words, removed from real life concerns and struggles for virtue. The love for wisdom (Philo-*Sophia*) should never separate her from her friends *Episteme* (justified knowledge), *Ennoia* (thoughtfulness) and *Arete* (virtue and excellence of any kind). They are the roots of our civilization, which the Ancient Greeks celebrated when placing their four statues on the façade of Ephesus' Library. Fraser quotes Aristotle's four forms of knowing—*techne* (skill), *phronesis* (practical knowing), *episteme* (scientific knowledge) and *sophia* (holistic knowledge, accounting for all things) (Fraser 2018, pp. 43–65). Different descriptors, but similarly identifying philosophy as a practice, a way of life, asking big questions and searching for meaning (Hadot 1995, 2002).

We may also reimagine wisdom narratives that avoid placing human beings at the forefront, or at the centre of things, like gods. Paradoxically, the humanistic project is problematic in this regard, in that humans are not the centre of the world. Without wisdom, and humility, we forget or ignore everything of mystery, and the realm of the unknown and unknowable, and our place in a larger scheme. The human condition does not entirely, or even mainly, accord to a set of laws or clear linear order: action is based on experience, and experience is subject to ongoing, unceasing variation; it points forward, to something further, a larger picture, a whole that may finally transcend our capacity to know. We are painfully aware that there is always a possibility of something else, from the background, from the depths and darkness, from the unknown, or the Other, breaking into the scene, undermining our certainties. It can happen at any moment in a life. Good science provides for uncertainty, not final answers; logos is always provisional, while mythos takes this as its prime territory.

So, the promise of happiness linked to science, to rational, epistemic knowledge, or evidence-based epistemology, is deeply flawed. Rationality offers foresight, but always provisionally. Conscious purpose, ruled by the cortex, is necessary to survive, to organise collective action, and to develop sophisticated technologies. At the same time, when becoming overly organised, it represents a dreadful menace to life and the planet (Bateson 1972). Fruitful action, ruled by conscious purpose, including our desperate efforts to control natural phenomena, and specifically to triumph against hostile and dangerous forces, is overly based on rational knowledge. Epistemic foresight—along with its technical outputs— seems to be an essential condition for a 'fully satisfying' human experience. But it is only one component, among many, in a quest for wisdom.

We are not against reason. The trouble is that reason has been considered sufficient for men and women of good will to live together and build a better society. And yet, history mocks this dream. The dream of the Enlightenment was one in which knowledge—not faith—was the only true and reliable basis for peace, freedom, and justice. In the dream of science, the establishment of universal knowledge would guarantee fair shares for all, unconditional approval for appropriate actions, which would then preserve society from hate and conflict. The French revolution symbolised the worship of reason, with the dignity of each human being, and the possibility of new bonds between people—horizontal instead of the vertical ones of the *Ancien Régime*—enshrined in its edicts. But the hope rapidly morphed into the Terror, as the masses became the new masters. That is how masters always behave, Lacan (1991) observed: they take over.

And what of reason's claim nowadays? We are offered the route to the best personal, professional and political action, derived from evidence-based data. Or this is what we are encouraged to think, unquestioningly. This is the new religion of the Algorithm, which risks degenerating into a form of trivialisation, if not terror. We are shaped to trust the algorithm, and to rely on decisions taken by some application but online searching may have marginalised serendipity and intuition. Mythos and the spiritual, working with the critical, might help us challenge new and troubling masters.

There is something profoundly hubristic and mistaken in thinking that satisfaction and emancipation can be the natural outcomes of (one)

Truth, religious or scientific, Catholicism or Communism, or even the digital world. Bateson called this a 'pathology of epistemology' (1972, pp. 478–487), based on the illusion of total knowledge and control. Predictability will not promote well-being or the good, if not counter-balanced by wisdom in the form of art, emotion, ritual, and dream; by mythos working to tame logos and its grandiosity. When human kind refers to science alone, it can be 'blinded' by an excess of light. Western faith in rationality is based on epistemological reductionism, eliding the content of scientific discourse, 'laws' and probabilities with the mysteries of reality itself. There are of course other forces at work: power, repression and the unconscious, which can at times fuel a social Darwinist universe of hate, envy, violent competition as well as the cult of success. We seek other ways, on our pilgrimages, to feel and think difficult thoughts, and to take care of our addictions, as well as to improve our sensitivity to glimpses of grace and beauty, of ugliness and injustice, of heaven and hell, in the ordinary. Poets know this. William Blake sought to reconnect heaven and hell, in spiritual life, rather than split them off into empty bombastic religion, or the denial of the sensuous and real. Both heaven and earth may be experienced in the here and now, if we learn to be humble and sensitive to their personal and cultural presence; especially when we engage with the difficult pilgrimage of psychic integration.

Keeping on Keeping on

We are approaching the end of our journey into multiple perspectives on transformation, learning and life. We feel like tightrope walkers. Maybe in fact this is a good metaphor for the human condition. Violence and fear, injustice and meaninglessness, mental suffering and materialist disaffection threaten our lives, locally, globally and ecologically. We exist perilously on an edge, struggling for balance. Our quest for safety, meaning, hope, and love is never ending, and, in fact, a matter of balance. But in the Anthropocene era, humans seem to be the masters, threatening to guillotine the planet itself.

The problem, as Bauman suggested, could be getting worse as learning, lifelong or in schools, is narrowed down to efficiency, or flexible functioning. Commodification brings the intoxicating promise of money,

material things, endless partners or new cars, even at the cost of impoverishing ourselves and the planet's resources. Learning to compete against brothers and sisters, friends and neighbours, and to 'win'—until the moment arrives when someone else 'wins' against us. There lies hell on earth. If learning is considered an individual commodity, a good to be accumulated, 'capitalised', bought and sold, an element in 'natural' competition, there is little or no possibility for mutual learning and recognition of the other; and for expressions of social solidarity. We must learn how to learn cooperatively in a way that nobody need 'lose'. And we must nurture an ongoing transformation that we do not always control.

Such transformation is desperately needed but often feels beyond our grasp. It entails, as we have said many times, a cultivation of a higher or more inclusive reframing of perspectives, which includes challenging the very suppositions of 'civilisation', based on binary thinking, splitting the individual from her environment (since birth), and the dominance of conscious purpose alongside the refusal of our fundamental dependence and vulnerability; and a dis-connection between parts and whole, subjectivity and the world. To learn how to re-connect—or celebrate existing bonds, if barely perceived—is the most difficult and yet the most relevant learning we can engage in; it is about facing and coping with fear, insecurity, silence, death, and otherness, as well as building meaning, a sense of the sacred and of interconnection in the everyday. The sacred, like love, is silenced in our consumerist discourse. Nothing is sacred, not even a cathedral, which we consider in our final metalogue.

But we can find hope in the unexpected emergence of new rituals, myths and metaphors. Adolescents experiment with rituals of bravery and belonging, and they embrace new (but very old) rituals of transition from adolescence to adulthood, at school, or in transitions at university. Marginalised people re-invent language, clothing, and self-expression on the streets, in new forms of art, music, dance and graffiti. And even the old ceremonies of marriage, burial, christening are re-interpreted in new ways, sometimes coloured by consumerist ideas, but often designed to share and celebrate togetherness. While we can be critical of the 'marketisation of the sacred', entailed in many contemporary ceremonies, we should recognise that, even in a world of cynical accountants or managerialism, it is impossible to eliminate myth, metaphor, and ritual altogether (Voss and Wilson 2017). They are part of us, and necessary for our lives and learning.

The very concept of perspective reminds us, throughout the book, that 'reality' as it appears is 'a product of our perception of how life is organized' (N. Bateson 2016, p. 152). Perceiving is not a passive act. When we see outlines, we 'create', 'construct', and name 'objects', 'spaces', 'individuals', and so on. We enact our perspective with others and make it 'true'. After that, we treat our distinctions, and what emanates from this, as 'real'. Human knowing, and culture, is partly about drawing boundaries, between us and them, past and present, mythos and logos: this is how we tend to function. It is our gift and our potential tragedy. As William Blake put it, when it comes to boundaries, the wise person and the fool are so close:

> Wise men see outlines and therefore they draw them
> Mad men see outlines and therefore they draw them. (William Blake, quoted by Bateson 1972, p. 27)

We want finally to return to the beginning of the book and reconnect with Bauman's notion of how fragile and superficial formation can be. Transformation becomes elusive, and even an illusion, at times, because it depends on sufficient feelings of selfhood to live a nomadic, imaginative life. Selfhood is fundamental to transformational learning, rather than the play of identity, as some have argued (see Illeris 2014). The self we have in mind is not over psychologised, but deeply embodied, forged in relationships; it is developmental rather than fixed, contingent on others and their/our responsiveness. Sometimes open, sometimes defended, hopefully with sparks of authenticity. There is scope for a real lifetime's quest for selfhood.

Curiosity and emotional openness, as well as qualities of mind, including critical reflexivity, are necessary for the journey. They are relational in quality. They depend on experiencing the good enough love of the (m) other, the attentiveness of a teacher/educator, the presence of a loving and caring group of brothers and sisters, and the ecstasy in a work of art. To have hope, we need to think that reparation and healing are possible, even when good enough love is hard to find in a manic, fractured and careless culture, organisation or family. A potentially agentic, questioning, challenging authentic selfhood may be reborn in an adult education class, a women's group or in social action in the local community.

The proximal system—the meso-system—is relevant in the shaping of this enhanced form of selfhood. Such selves are needed socially, culturally and politically to challenge the abuse of the other and the fragile eco-system. We have experienced, across the book, dialogical spaces with diverse groups of academics, students, professionals and adult learners. There is a need for a renewed adult education, a community-based approach to learning, a reassertion of the importance of the public realm, and of the interdependence of all learners. The connections we might then make encompass the spirit as well as an equitable sharing of the earth's abundance. A spirit revitalised maybe by revisiting Blake's Tyger, burning bright as well as the sunflower turning to the light, each glorious if vulnerable and threatened. We are spiritual, imaginal as well as rational creatures, who can thrive in curiosity; and yet who struggle as psychological nomads, even if this is essential to perspective transformation. We rely too on the otherness of myth and art. They constantly remind us that we are not gods. Picture Guernica; picture the baby shredded in a Syrian town by a cluster bomb. Imagine boat loads of migrants perishing in the Mediterranean. Look death and devils right in the eye, they are part of us and require recognition in transformative learning.

An important truth of this chapter, and our whole book, is to claim, with Fraser (2018), that we are more likely to become lifelong learners, in the sense of a struggle towards healing, integration and wholeness, if we abandon rational certitude and embrace curiosity and openness. Dialogue is the necessary road to authenticity and to encounters with truth, however ragged and imperfect; even to encounters with the divine, however fleeting and fragile. In a world that is exploding with diversity and polarisations, this is the only way—if difficult—to pursue the decent life. Such a road requires the right rhythms of conversation, and writing, as well as criticality and reason. We need time, and good quality time for emancipation (Alhadeff-Jones 2016). Time for pilgrimage and to wrestle with our conflicts, dilemmas, paradoxes and conceits. Time to become more aware of our tendency to split ourselves and the world into the binaries of good and bad, one truth rather than another, logos and mythos, the spiritual and material, education and therapy, immanence and transcendence. Transformation lies in resisting these seductive, reductive dynamics in every one of us, and in recognising the pattern that connects.

Fig. 10.1 Milan, *The Duomo and Samsung*, March 25, 2018. Photo by Gaia Bonanomi

Why Samsung? A Tale of Two Cathedrals, a Final Metalogue

Linden: Laura, why is a huge Samsung screen flashing images of beautiful young people, mobile phones and expensive cars on the left-hand side of the Duomo, your stunning Milan Cathedral? (Fig. 10.1).

Laura: A screen? I never noticed it. Well, I don't go very often to Piazza del Duomo indeed. And when I do, I am too busy to raise my head. I guess that it became normal for me. It began some years ago, if I remember, there were protests, but now the city centre is all tapestried with screens. They bring money to the owners of the buildings and to the municipality. Maybe Samsung is sponsoring some restoration of the Cathedral. It is expensive.

Linden: Is this 'normal' to you?

Laura: It became normal. Or better, invisible. We are anesthetized, this is how perception works a difference that once made a difference stops making any difference. We need another perspective to awaken our senses, as you are doing now with me. Thank you, by the way.

Linden: It is also fashion week in Milan. Let's try to work some more on making the strange familiar and the familiar strange.

Laura: Yes, let's do that. Fashion week annoys me so much. But I know that I should be curious: this is an amazing occasion for observation and reflection. Did you notice how people crowd every single place with their smartphones and I-Phones, trying to capture some image to be posted in Instagram? If you do not post, it seems that you do not exist. And a post, of course, needs likes. Is this a new, distorted version of recognition? There are thousands of youngsters hoping to be seen, out there: they wear fancy outfits and as numerous photographers

are chasing them, to capture the 'new emerging styles'. Everybody is a stylist or a photographer or a model, these days. We are entrapped in a new kind of theatre.

Linden: I know what you mean. Yesterday I queued to enter the Duomo. When I finally got inside, I was muttering to myself about the commercialised display of flesh outside, and maybe also feeling a little envious of youth. Those young models strutting their stuff, maybe in beautiful ways, in the Via Dante and in the Vittorio Emanuele arcade. I had gotten up close, with lots of other people, desperate as they were to take photographs of the young and beautiful and of those who clothe them. I was too squashed to find my phone, even if I'd wanted to capture the moment. But I saw something unexpected on the face of one young woman who looked tired: I could see pimples on her face, no doubt to be air-brushed out in the allusions of glamour magazines and the projections of sex, youth and the transforming power of consumption. All is not what it seems. We can be a culture of manipulated desire, of projective identification with consumption and images: if we just had one new thing—a new BMW, a Gucci handbag, or a Samsung—then our lives would be really transformed.

Laura: In these days, flights from Rio de Janeiro, Moscow, Cape Town, Mexico City, Hong Kong bring thousands of adolescent models here, male and female, underweight, distressed, all of them hoping for visibility. Visibility means success, if only for a while. There are agencies that specialize in the transport, allocation, mobilization and marketisation of this human flesh. It is horrible, especially if you think that we are building walls against other fugitives. As a mother I wonder about these children: who sees them? Who cares for them? Are they happy? Are they learning, and if so what?

Linden: The Cathedral offered some respite that day, a moment for the spirit, maybe, and surely there was no better place to be, close to Maria Nascente. There was a mass taking place inside, and I wandered to the edge of the sacramental space, wondering whether to enter. But there was no clear way in, so I meandered to another space beyond the high altar, where there was a replica of the Maria—like the grand and glorious statue at the pinnacle of the cathedral's roof. It was huge, if smaller than the original.

Laura: Yes, the name that Milaneses give to her is 'La Madunina', the little Madonna. The roof is so high that the golden statue looks very tiny. When the sky is blue, that figure on the white mass of the Duomo

shines kilometres away. La Madunina is a symbol of the city. Along with a famous song—Oh my beautiful Madunina—that celebrates the capacity of Milan to welcome and include others, especially from the rural areas and the south of Italy. In the past, inclusion meant the capacity of the city to enhance its workforce to sustain productive industries. The song is also ironic: it highlights the work ethic that is considered a special feature of the Milanese people, different from the rest of the country. If you breathe this air, you become a workaholic! And Milan was the cradle of adult education for workers too. Do you remember the Umanitaria society, where we had an ESREA conference in 2009? But I am digressing. I would like to go back to your experience in the Duomo.

Linden: While I was there, near the golden Madonna, I went back to a moment in Israel, earlier this year, as part of a project on civic education for democracy. We visited Nazareth and Canaan. The young people caught my eye. Young Arab Israelis for the most part, looking, well, ordinary, but also radiant, as the young can, even in poverty. One of them could have been Mary, ordinary, soon to be caught up in, well, a mystery, an encounter with the divine, if you buy into the story. When heaven met earth in the Annunciation. How on earth, so to speak, does the image in Nazareth relate to that of Maria Nascente in the Duomo of Milan?

Laura: I get it. If there was a 'real' Madonna, she would have been like those young mothers. Simple. Full of Grace. What a contrast with those beautiful models that we were talking about. Same age, maybe same poverty, but different hopes and dreams. Different possibilities.

Linden: And then another thing happened, as I left the Duomo. Hundreds of women, I am not exaggerating, in head scarves, in the Orthodox fashion, holding their children's hands, were entering the Cathedral. I asked an attendant what was happening as the cast of characters changed at the altar. Four Orthodox priests took over.

Laura: Are you sure? That's not possible! The Duomo is a Catholic church.

Linden: Wait wait. Yes, I am sure. The attendant said to me 'Oh they have come to worship at the nail from the one True and Holy Cross, it's one of our relics. Both the Catholics and the Orthodox think it is holy, and there are services from time to time to pay homage, in both traditions'. The faces of some of those worshippers seemed awe struck, and the sense of reverence was, well, frankly moving. I had such mixed

feelings, in the moment, as the images of the young men and women in Nazareth flooded back, fusing with those of the young models, of Maria Nascente, and of the young people in contemporary Nazareth.

Laura: Wow, this is a very nice image to share, of inter-religious bridging. But the Holy Nail! I do not know what to think about it. It is pagan, in a way, it reminds me of Bateson's position about totems and rituals, as necessary to contain and convey a complex truth about life that would not be accessible in other ways. He wonders about the end of totemism, the secularization of the Christian message, and more generally, the loss of the sacred, that he considers as a threat to our mental well-being. The awareness of being part of a larger whole, the feeling of transcendence, comes with such consciousness. It also brings shadows with it. The boundary between religion and magic is very subtle. Or between sanity and madness. Rituals bring the body, the unconscious, symbols and metaphors, and mystery, into the picture. What are these people really worshipping? What is the sacred?

Linden: Worshipping gets it exactly. And what is the quality of the experience? More and more I am thinking about the quality of our relationship to knowledge and ways of knowing; and that some ways of knowing are richer and deeper than others. Like the metaphors of the Christian story, once we get beyond the pomp and pomposity of the Church. Buying into the Church can also however be a way of dealing with inner chaos finding a structure, imbibing a story as given. It was the same with Communism; maybe with many other isms too. They abolish uncertainty and give us a home; a false and ultimately self-defeating prison of a home, but a home nonetheless.

I am also thinking of the divine finding space in the ordinary; of a vulnerable baby depending on us for life and nurture. Of a prophet preaching love for the outsider, the outcast, the migrant. Of an idea that recognised the divine in every one of us, an impetus towards equality, which was powerful in the British traditions of workers' education. Of a prophet in Palestine who in fact was a migrant himself. Such metaphors can provoke richer thoughts in us, about the sacred and what happens when it is lost, and especially about the idea of the divine in the ordinary. Rather different in fact from shopping malls built to look like cathedrals, but where the imagery is ultimately tawdry and unsatisfying. I fail to see the divine in a shopping mall, but maybe I am missing something.

Laura: We live in a secular, very prosaic society. I know that you are nearer to religion than I am, Linden. But I crave for the sacred, for the capacity to resonate with the whole, and I understand why so many of us are trying, in our own ways, to achieve some wisdom. So, going back to the beginning of our conversation, that big Samsung screen…

Linden: Yes, I came out, and there it was, temporally blinding, in its sheer power, with its images of bright young things finding happiness and sex in a new Samsung Galaxy 7. Images of transformation; of Maria, and her encounter with the divine; of young models air brushed to sell products to transform your life. Of beliefs that might transform an encounter with a nail. A mix of ordinariness, faith, seduction, profanity and stunning beauty. Christ and the money lenders, came to mind, as did Marx and his observation that all that is sacred is profaned in capitalism.

Laura: It feels like a bad trip with hallucinogens.

Linden: The struggle for me, in this kaleidoscope of images and sensations, set in this scintillating, noisy, theatre of a city, was how to make sense of the collisions. And to answer a question about what on earth has it to do with a book on transforming perspectives?

Laura: You already answered the question. We are doing this in our conversation.

Linden: Do you remember Woody Allen in *Manhattan*, wondering why life is worth living, and finding some answers in a melange of cultural symbols of Groucho Marx, Swedish movies, Marlon Brando, and Cézanne, to name but a few. For him, like me, in the middle of late modernity's bewildering conflicted intensities, energy could lie in nomadic experience, alongside precariousness and fragility. Relationships are crucial for the endless possibility of human transformation in the nomadic life. We can keep on keeping on because there is beauty, all around, alongside ugliness, awe and wonder as well as absurdity, in the everyday; and other people come alongside, to offer things that replenish us. You know, processing such experience, in dialogue, is a profound necessity.

Laura: Yes, it seems that you are more optimistic now… am I wrong? To keep on keeping on, we need hope, trust, good enough relationships. Difficult but not impossible to find, especially if we are ready to cultivate it. The great adult educators we quoted in Chapter 8 were not naïve, they knew about the absurdities of the world. Nonetheless they

were able to dream the world, and the other, as it is not yet, but could be. We need our utopians to guide us on our way through dystopia.

Linden: I think faith matters, in this nomadic pilgrimage through well, to recall Bauman, the liquid modern landscape. There are I think places of firmer ground, forged in the quality of our relationships to people and good objects. We can find such ground in love, joy, exhilaration, in Nazareth, in Michelangelo, and in dialogue about things we hold as divine. By living life to the full, in all its contradiction and messiness. It includes being challenged over the beauty of the Pieta. Keeping on keeping on means keeping the conversation going, however hurt and confused we feel, because there is always another way of seeing, another perspective, and another beating heart of life to inspire and challenge us. Lifelong learning in the company of friends, moments of genuine adult education. Laura, tell me now what you see when you glance at Canterbury Cathedral?

Laura: My perception of your Cathedral was strongly shaped by the context. Canterbury is not Milano! Every time I came to your city we had to pass through the Cathedral grounds to reach the University. This is a great privilege of yours, to begin your working days like that. Knowing that for centuries the pilgrims from all over the 'known' Christian world headed there, to a place that itself became a symbol. And for me, it meant that I didn't have to pay, as all the other visitors do, to be allowed in the space. Pilgrimage and tourism follow different rules.

Linden: But of course, most people do pay to get in there, as they do to the Duomo, unless they are going to a service, or work at Christ Church, or are local. It costs a lot of money. And it is difficult to find the signs that tell you that you can get in free if you want to attend a service or to pray.

Laura: I remember when you took me for a walk uphill, and we followed a stretch of the Francigena route. From a little country church, we were able to see the Cathedral at a distance and imagine the pilgrims' jubilation at the first sight, after all that walking. Nearer to God. I remember the boys' choir in the Cathedral that touched my soul and provoked tears, for the sweetness of their voices. We were having a conference, in those days, right in front of the Cathedral, in the Lodge. The fact that they host academic conferences in their premises is very remarkable. The separation of science and religion, of knowledge and wisdom, is an issue that needs new answers. Firstly, biographically. I was very fond of the Enlightenment, as an adolescent. Science was the solution

to religious obscurantism. Reason could save me from the repression of my teachers—Catholic nuns, by the way. I passed the rest of my life trying to recover from that schism.

Linden: I was thinking then about a story from travel writer William Dalrymple, who visited a Syrian Church, well before recent catastrophes, retracing the steps of a sixth century Byzantium monk. A priest took him inside the church, when a group of Muslims entered, to Dalrymple's surprise. They began to pray at a shrine to the virgin, and he looked on in wonder. 'Oh they come in everyday', the priest remarked, 'she is holy to them too, you know'. The church probably no longer exists, destroyed no doubt by barbarism. We can celebrate and worship objects that might even transcend our differences, while recognising that we can easily destroy them. All that seems solid and beautiful is easily blown away. 'Oh and by the way', the priest observed, 'the Muslim form of prayer, kneeling and bowing on the floor, was learnt from the early Christians, who, at some stage, for reasons of their own, stopped doing it'. In diversity lies a sameness, if only we make the effort to see.

Laura: I am also thinking about representations of women and men. Of idealised motherhood, for instance, in Italian culture, fostered by the Church. Of the need to break free, but then maybe to return, to experience objects in new ways; like cathedrals.

Linden: And I was thinking of men, and dominant constructions of masculinity; and in a sense how feminine the priestly role can be, with men dressed in frocks. Of how feminine it can be, but also how false and abusive it has sometimes been; priestly abuse, that is. And where does this leave me as a father, husband, man and colleague? Maybe we can represent to our children, and to students, a different set of possibilities, of male power that is non-hierarchical, collaborative and enabling. Of a capacity for love, of a non-narcissistic kind, and to take care of the divine in the ordinary. And to engage in conversations in inclusive ways that encompass Mary Magdalene, the migrant, patriarchy and all those who suffer and mourn. And to recognise the spiritual in the social, life in a good object, the potential for transformation in the good metaphor, while also remembering our shared vulnerability and capacity for hubris.

Epilogue: So What?

So, we are almost at the end of our pilgrimage, at least for now. Except there are several matters we want to raise with you, our dear reader, about what we have done, and what we hoped to achieve. We do not know who you are, if you are a man or a woman, or if you refuse such categorisation; nor do we know your background, and life experience. We hope that you found some meaning in what we have written, that you resonate with some of our stories and arguments, but we guess that you might also have felt disorientated, even frustrated at times.

This is what happens when the main message is in the method, rather than the content. In talking about transformation, learning and education, we have tried to demonstrate, throughout the book, that there is no definitive answer, or final truth. Our way of writing has to do with the importance of dialogue, and keeping this going, and the quality of relationships, including with the symbolic and imaginal worlds. This requires openness and getting lost sometimes. We need methods beyond the academic habitus, beyond specialization, and jargon, beyond fixing ideas to the Procrustean bed.

It is insufficient, we claim, to engage with a perspective and an author in overly detached and abstract ways, as is often the case with academic texts. For things to be made meaningful, we must learn to

digest an idea or image and allow it to work in us, in deeply personal and experiential ways; otherwise it becomes like a resounding gong, or clanging cymbal, making much noise but little else (and this is Linden's biblical allusion to St Paul's poetry on the importance of love). To learn, in transformative ways, has to do with learning to love our specific objects of enquiry, or at least the quest itself, and to engage our whole self—mind, body, heart, feelings, imagination and soul—in the company of others. This takes time, maybe a lifetime.

A reader of ours (the publisher's reviewer) stated that our work perceived the territory, or the ocean of human experience, more from below: from a subterranean perspective, or the unconscious, rather than from the top of a mountain or similar vantage point. We played in the book with the visual metaphor of perspective, as giving a very partial idea of what knowing is. We do not have, as limited humans, an Olympian vantage point, despite frequent claims in the academy to the contrary. You, the reader, will have your own references and images, and we would be very happy to know that our dialogue encouraged you to engage with them further, to explore the depth of your experience, not from above, but inside. We have called it soulwork and it can take many forms.

We think that our metaphor of pilgrimage encompasses light and height as well as darkness and depth, when energised by personal and cultural reflexivity. Our journey was not about either or, but to do with a quality of bright light that emerges when engaging with different perspectives, and when moving in and out of darkness, and of learning to appreciate the interplay of shadow and light, to make form more visible.

In writing together, in such a style and with these aims, we have glimpsed something of the overall shape and texture of the domain called transformation, lifelong learning and adult education, as well as the power of metaphor, like pilgrimage, sea or landscape. We feel like wanderers who may see things that others have seen, and valued, but then have tried to piece more of this together, beyond fragments, in a pattern that connects. And yet, to pursue the metaphor of the sea and water for a moment we are reminded that many of our seas, lakes and landscapes are polluted. We have sought to be true to everything

we perceive, however distasteful or difficult, while accepting our limits and trying to avoid a moral superiority. We are not theologians, or expert scholars of art, or ecologists, and the literatures drawn on are ours, to the neglect of others. You may have different preferences and conversations.

So, this book is not, and cannot be, the final word. As we began in the first metalogue, we have sought to show and make explicit our perspectives, in dialogue: what we observe, think, feel and write in relationship. It worked for us and was deeply satisfying while doing it. And because of this, we think the book can enrich the dialogical encounter with you: precisely because the text has depth, verisimilitude and integrity. Now we await your response, in countless spaces, knowing that dialogue can always be richer; and if not, we will try to understand why, and to keep the conversation going, if at all possible, because this is fundamental to good enough lifelong learning, adult education and the possibility of transformative experience.

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