



Intimacies of being in learning design

by

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Summary

In the university, broadly speaking, there are two worlds of learning design: the institutional and the personal. The institutional kind is utilitarian and instruments the agenda of the university; this kind is self-assured and self-proclaiming - and the only kind disposed to tell us what it is. The personal kind, in contrast, is quiet and more hidden, invisibly integrated in the ordinary teaching practices of university educators like you and I. This kind may go unnoticed altogether, were it not for the schisms in our work that show us that there is *more* going on for us than is institutionally inscribed on the surface of our work - more than at first appears, and more than we can say, too. What we feel are the hidden, deeper currents of our educative commitments, where one's being and doing are not separate, where one's work is for the sake of the self – oneself and others. These are the ontological and existential undercurrents of our learning design work.

Also tangled in this undergrowth is the neglected suchness of the 'design' part of learning design. The question of its phenomenal significance is explored through locating learning design within a philosophical literature of design, yielding insight into the way in which design gives to teaching its distinctive character as the *figure of freedom*.

In this professional doctorate, I enter into this more intimate world of learning design by asking a question about learning design that has not been asked before: *how does learning design as such show itself to be?* This question is a phenomenological question, asked from inside the experience itself. Hermeneutic phenomenology is apposite to this kind of enquiry for, in this methodology, theorised pre-conceptions are eschewed, giving room for the phenomenon to speak itself.

With ethics approved, six university teachers were interviewed, yielding a rich data set of sixty unguarded stories of being in learning design, each story in its own way a window into the phenomenon. A hermeneutic analysis of the phenomenon occurred through my own sustained and 'lived' immersion in the stories, interpretive writing, and the reading of existential philosophers, chiefly Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger.

By this philosophical method, four essential characteristics of the phenomenon of being in learning design are disclosed: 1) the inner workings of the question; 2) a conscience

of learning; 3) the forces of learning; and 4) the rule of breaking. At bottom, it seems that our being in learning design is *an onto-existential affair with what is 'learning', in which we try to save learning from disappearing into being by staying involved with its appearance and disappearance - in and with our own being.*

A further interpretive turn brings these philosophical findings back into the concrete professional arena of university teaching practice. No great claims are made, no models constructed, and no system reforms demanded. What this thesis offers instead is a way to see, say and save the intimacies in our learning design work, so that we might more deliberately nurture and vouchsafe its life-giving depths and meaningfulness as a vital part of our teaching.

Declaration

*All that I have writ is me -
prayer-bird and poetry,
the Eye that kept me company,
the flesh of words, the death of years -
from first address to last reply
no part is more nor less than I.*

Yes, I certify that this thesis:

1. does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and
2. to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed: Nicola Parkin

March 2021

This thesis uses APA 7 referencing style, with the following exceptions: I have used hyphens instead of the ugly *em* dash; italics to indicate emphasis, but only where they *seemed to insist*; headings all in lower case because they wanted to be humble; and paragraphs with breathing spaces between them. These eccentricities have been included for their characterfulness.

No external editor was used in the production of this work. Any errors are my own.

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To Lewis, who looked over my shoulder as I wrote, and inspired my search for depth and meaningfulness.

Finally, to my forever partner Troy - for your enduring love and patience, thank you from the bottom, top, middle and edges of my heart. - And thank you for your wisdom. When you said to me one day, in discussion on some minor point, “well, if it is something, there will be more”, you innocently passed to me the core ingredient of this thesis.

Reading the thesis

I invite you to come with me into this hidden world of learning design. I will trace with my words the twisting turning labours of my thinking so that you can follow along, but it is your own answering thought that brings this thesis to life and *fulfils* it. I invite you then to ‘partner’ with the text, to participate in the thinking, to get involved (Smythe & Spence, 2012).

The first chapter starts where we are, in our context of higher education, and situates the concerns and significance of the research. The second chapter looks to the substance of the project itself – its questions and its design. In the third chapter I look to the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology, and in the next, how it was used as a research method. In the fifth chapter I pursue the ‘design’ part of learning design and try to understand its place in this research. The next four chapters each explicate four phenomenal essences – the findings of the research. In the last chapter I gather the threads of the thesis and turn at last to what these intimacies of being and doing might mean for practice. Appendices are included at the end of the thesis for further reference, indicated throughout the text where they are relevant.

I have used the first person voice throughout, for hermeneutic phenomenology is a ‘self-conscious method’ (Piantanida et al., 2000, p. 103), and the personal pronoun is, in any case, entirely befitting an enquiry exploring into the intimacies of practice. After all, *I* am the one seeking, gathering, wondering and interpreting – why cover this up? You will note that I also appeal to ‘us’ collectively, we who are concerned with university teaching and learning; and sometimes, directly to you, the reader.

A note about the registers of the text. The main register is the cogent academic narrative (hopefully sensible, but not too neat, for that would be a lie). A sub-register of text breaks through here and there; these are my raw thoughts, indicated as *paragraphs in full italics*. My intention with this sub-register, in the spirit of the methodology, is to capture intact the original impulse of my thoughts as they come to me, before being overwritten by orthodox academic language. They also serve as a literary device with which to “furnish a lesson in ontological amplification” through which “we shall be sure to reverberate above, or on the margin of reasonable certainties” (Bachelard, 1958/2014, p. 232). I have also tucked in

a few poems and such between chapters. These small indulgences are very much part of the dissertation journey, and belong to the project just as much as the prose.

Related published work

Parkin, N. (2015, June 22). *Attending, revealing, and shifting: The nature of being in design* [Conference presentation]. College of Education, Psychology & Social Work Post Graduate Scholars Conference, Flinders University, Adelaide.

Parkin, N. (2015, September 22). *Designing with uncertainty, not against it* [Conference presentation]. Higher Education Research Group of Adelaide (HERGA), Adelaide.

Parkin, N. (2016, June 20). *Thesis, unfolding itself* [Conference presentation]. College of Education, Psychology & Social Work Post Graduate Scholars Conference, Flinders University, Adelaide.

Parkin, N. (2017, June 14). *Slow design for slow pedagogy* [Guest presentation]. Mindfulness Special Interest Group, Flinders University, Adelaide.

Parkin, N. (2017, June 19). *A window on windows: Knowledge, knowing and not knowing in hermeneutic interpretation* [Conference presentation]. College of Education, Psychology & Social Work Post Graduate Scholars Conference, Flinders University, Adelaide.

Parkin, N. (2017, September 21). *Existentially grounded: A philosophy of slow to support university teachers' being in learning design* [Conference presentation]. Adelaide University Student Conference in Education, Adelaide

Wadham, B., & Parkin, N. (2017). Strange new world: Being a professional and the professional doctorate in the twenty-first century. *Innovations in Education and*

Teaching International, 54(6), 615–624.

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Parkin, N. (2018, April 9-11). *Onto-existential movements in learning design* [Poster presentation]. Flexible Learning Association of New Zealand (FLANZ), Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Parkin, N. (2018, April 17-19). *A fluvial meditation on the sympathies between coursework, dissertation and practice in the professional doctorate* [Poster presentation]. Quality in Postgraduate Research, Adelaide.

Parkin, N. (2018, June 19). *20 shots of meaningfulness* [Pechakucha presentation]. College of Education, Psychology & Social Work Post Graduate Scholars Conference, Flinders University, Adelaide.

Parkin, N. (2019, November 29). *Preserving a place for the question in higher education* [Conference presentation]. College of Education, Psychology & Social Work Post Graduate Scholars Conference, Flinders University, Adelaide.

Parkin, N. (2020). Turning differently toward learning design, and finding the real gift of slow. *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, 8(1), 121-126.

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Parkin, N. (2020, August 27). *Educative humility* [Human library 'book']. Deakin University Students as Partners Roundtable, Online.

Parkin, N. (2020, November 10). *The undercurrents in our learning design work* [Conference presentation]. College of Education, Psychology & Social Work Post Graduate Scholars Conference, Flinders University, Adelaide.



Philosophie (1907) by Gustav Klimt (1862-1918).

One: A hidden world

Once before, when camping on a mountaintop with some friends when I was ten or eleven, I had seen stars in such numbers that they filled the sky. It almost seemed as if the sky would break under the weight of all those things and come tumbling down. ...there were simply too many stars, and the sky was too vast and deep. A huge, overpowering foreign object, it surrounded me, enveloped me, and made me feel almost dizzy. Until that moment, I had always thought that the earth on which I stood was a solid object that would last forever. [But] beneath its breathtaking skyful of stars, the uncertainty of my own existence struck me with full force. [Now] looking up at the dawn stars from the bottom of a well ... I felt a deep sense of intimacy towards them: they were my stars, visible to no one but me, down here in the dark well. I embraced them as my own, and they in turn showered me with energy and warmth.

- Haruki Murakami, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*

Ultimately, any existential phenomenological study is a study of *being*, accessed through a particular kind of lived experience. The experience at the heart of this study is of 'being in learning design'. We enter through the way of *intimacy*, for this is a hidden world of learning design, a personal kind of learning design quite different to the institutional kind. This research sensitively unconceals the intimacies of this world, so that what is otherwise unsayable or unsaid might speak back into higher education, furnishing a deeper, more rounded understanding about what really goes on when we 'do' learning design.

At the centre of this research project is the individual, a human being whose experience is synonymous with their work; for whom being and doing are not separate.

This chapter begins 'in situ', opening to view the worlds in which the enquiry takes place, and locates the enquiry in its contexts. It also locates the methodological stance of the enquiry as part of broader ontological turn in higher education, and concludes by making a statement about the significance of the project as contributing to a deeper and perhaps more generative understanding of what is learning design. As such, this chapter both lays the ground *and* clears the ground for the thesis.

Two worlds of learning design

What is learning design? In 2011 Yishay Mor and Brock Craft (2012) convened a forum to ask this very question, and to provoke learning design as a unified field of practice.

Learning design, they then offered, is “the act of devising new practices, plans of activity, resources and tools aimed at achieving particular educational aims in a given situation” (p. 86) – a definition based in action, but that neatly takes into its sweep its artefacts and intentions. But the matter is far from settled. If learning design, as an individual act, is aware of itself as a practice, perhaps even a field of professional practice, it is still emerging into (and out of) itself – and it does so with its inherent obscurities and contradictions intact. Indeed, I would argue that if learning design *is* self-aware, it is richer for the obscurities of its ‘doing’.

Educational researchers have told us that teachers of higher education are already routinely doing learning design as an integrated part of their teaching (see especially Beetham & Sharpe, 2007; Bennett et al., 2011; Britain, 2007; Dall’Alba, 2005; Goodyear et al., 2001; Mor & Craft, 2012; O’Toole, 2015). As a practice, then, learning design is difficult to extract from its context; it is ‘embedded’ in teaching practice, as Peter Goodyear says (2018, para. 1); and hidden in teaching’s ‘intimate spaces’ (Barnett & Guzmán-Valenzuela, 2017, p. 11). So intimate is it to teaching, it does not claim to ‘be’ anything, or to declare itself as ‘learning design’, as such – *yet it is there*, lodged in the teacher as an individual, as a certain, if indefinable quality of experience that is to do with the acts of teaching, but that somehow exceeds the acts of teaching itself. A sense, perhaps, of something to be encountered that gives both freedom and form to one’s teaching. The shadow of this quality may feel familiar to us, but falls upon our work without words. This I call *personal learning design*.

But within the world of higher education, two worlds of learning design exist together. While the personal kind is hard to see and say, the other kind very much says what it is, and what it is for. *This* kind of learning design is calculative and strategic, serving the institution, not the individual (Schwier et al., 2004). This kind of learning design acts as a kind of engine-room geared to the optimal production and consumption of higher education; it is an instrument for productivity, concerned with matters of efficiency, quality, accountability, consistency and reliability (Bird et al., 2007; Reigeluth, 1983; Rowland, 1993; Smith & Ragan, 2004). I call this kind *institutional learning design*; a learning design caught up not in the individual, but in the spoke-wheels of the larger designs of the institution. Institutional

learning design has ‘designs’ on learning and teaching; it is intentional, performance-based, outcomes-driven work which intends to systematically bring educational offerings in line with institutional agendas. We see this kind of learning design enacted in narratives about ‘good’ teaching and learning.

I feel I am qualified to say there are two worlds of learning design because I live these two worlds every day. I work both as a professional learning designer, and sometimes, as a casual academic teacher. I know how different these worlds can be, and I move between them; I am an outlier of both, belonging wholly to neither. I transgress their separateness, too, working in a third-space of practice (Whitchurch, 2008). I know too that just as they are distinct, these worlds are also inseparably entangled, each influencing the other, in witting and unwitting ways. In this research project, separating them into their kinds is a device for contrast and amplification, without which a personal learning design might not appear as a phenomenon for enquiry at all, so intimate is it to teaching.

To see the institutional and the personal kinds of learning design contrasted side by side, I share a small story of a real encounter from my own experience a few years ago. This is a facsimile of the actual conversation as it happened, overlaid with my private thoughts, faithfully rendered. Pseudonyms have been used.

I am at my desk, in the elearning support team office. Adam, the elearning officer in the cubicle next to me, is on the phone with an academic helping to them fix a problem to do with settings on a tool. Dave comes into the office looking to speak to Adam; he is also trying to solve a problem. As he is waiting for Adam to finish his phone call, I pop my head around the divider and ask him how teaching is going (*I think, maybe learning design is a conversation that happens when you are waiting to solve a problem?*). Dave says he is having trouble getting students to do readings before coming to tutorial (*I think, Dave is in the mode of fixing problems right now - maybe he wants a solution for this too. I think, it is not my job to offer solutions, this is not a problem to be fixed like a wrong setting; I should help Dave think about the situation for himself. I think, I cannot ‘help’ someone else think, that is arrogant, and anyway - he is sharing this problem with me and I am glad, because it is not to do with technology. I think, a learning designer does not know about what works in a tutorial, they are not teaching. Perhaps I should stick to technology advice – but that is so boring, and anyway, this is not about technology.*) I share with Dave

something that had worked for me in a subject I taught a couple of years ago (*I think, I am not being a learning designer right now, I am being me. I am giving him something that 'belongs' to me, it came from me, this is given peer to peer. I wonder if Dave sees me as a peer*). Dave says he is working on a new subject (*I think, it is my job to help Dave do this. I will be able to log this as an 'ad hoc learning design encounter'. I will please my boss if I do this. I like my boss because she is letting me do academic work on the side. Maybe I can give her something that she needs. She needs 'data'.*) I say, "Great! do you want to have a meeting and talk about that?". Dave shifts on his feet and looks away (*I think, I sounded too keen. Maybe he knows I am after an outcome for myself*). He says "Oh, let me think about it more first, then... maybe we can talk about some of the details". (*I think, maybe Dave thinks I want to correct his thinking. Maybe he thinks this is not my business, that the subject is his to think about. Maybe he likes to think about it on his own. I think, he is right to think this way, I would be the same. I think, an encounter with a learning designer should be avoided, we always trying to poke in where we don't belong!*) I nod and say, "of course".

Personal learning design

We start with ourselves, in the realm of the personal. University teachers enjoy, for the most part, a great deal of autonomy and responsibility in their roles (Agostinho et al., 2018; Bennett et al., 2011; Feldman, 2002; Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2013; McInnis, 2000; Sloan & Bowe, 2015), where they are

neither following a prescribed curriculum, nor having to adopt a particular pedagogical approach. Both of these teaching tasks — the design of a curriculum and the determination of the actual ways of teaching a subject — fall on the shoulders of individual teachers.

(Guzmán-Valenzuela & Barnett, 2013, p. 893)

University teachers *like* to figure things out for themselves (Albi, 2007; Bennett et al., 2017; Magliaro & Shambaugh, 2005; Mason, 2015; McKinney, 2004; O'Toole, 2015; Sloan & Bowe, 2015), working from their individual ways of thinking (Magliaro & Shambaugh, 1999) and within their disciplinary ways of thinking (Land, 2013). They are also keen to take a lesson from the experience of their peers in the same situation (Agostinho et al., 2018; Mishra & Koehler, 2003). In this way we can see that learning design, as an everyday, integrated part of one's teaching, is indeed 'personal' work, in both the 'way' and the 'what' of it (Pedgley,

2007). So too is it *experienced* as personal (Sloan & Bowe, 2015, p. 139), a mode of ‘felt’ practice in which the self and the design are deeply entangled. There is a feel for the design, and a feel for the self too, for “an educator brings their whole self to the job” (Sloan & Bowe, 2015, p.87). Yes, one’s ‘self’ is vested ‘in’ the work of it; so much so that teachers “are willing to ‘fight for’ their design” (p. 130), and may feel a deep personal loss when their design is taken away (Spier, 2016, p. 225). So *living* is ‘the design’ (as a thing, as a noun), and so *lived* is the ‘doing’ of the design work, it is fair to say of a personal learning design that one is simply ‘in’ it: our ‘doing’ is inseparable from our ‘being’.

In this ‘felt’ kind of practice, it may be hard to say what it is, exactly, that we do, or why we do it in such-and-such a way - but still it does not follow that we do not ‘know’ it. Michael Polanyi, in his philosophy of personal knowledge (1961, 1958/1974, 1966/2009), said it best when he observed that “we can know more than we can tell” (1966/2009, p. 4). In this he reclaims the tacit intelligence of human being:

This conception of knowledge as personal knowing departs in two closely related respects from the ideal of a strictly justifiable knowledge. It accredits man's capacity to acquire knowledge even though he cannot specify the grounds of his knowing, and it accepts the fact that his knowing is exercised within an accidentally given framework that is largely unspecifiable... to this extent knowing is an indwelling. (1961, p. 468)

The content of a personal knowing is “undefinable, indeterminate, strictly personal”, and one is simply drawn by something “that no one can tell” (1966/2009, p. 75) but which nonetheless claims us with an inner sense of rightness (1958/1974). So too is the educator following hunches and trusting intuitions (Bills et al., 2016) and whose teaching “begins with a tacit sense of what they are being called upon to be and to do” (Spier, 2016, p. 17). All practitioners, says designer, scholar and educator Donald Schön, echoing Polanyi’s words almost exactly, “know more than they can say” (1983, p. viii). Practitioner knowing, says Schön, is honed, intuitive, spontaneous, crafted over time - and yet “when we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss... our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our *feel for the stuff* [emphasis added] with which we are dealing” (p. 49). What is this stuff we have a feel for? Learning design deals not just with educational matters, but with institutional expectations, policies, resources, time, the profile of the cohort, who is teaching, and so forth (Greenberg et al., 2019; Vu & Dall’Alba, 2014). All of this figures in and configures

our design work, acting both as freedoms and constraints (Greenberg et al., 2019, p. 53), and all of this is constantly in motion. So too is the student in motion as they learn (Norman, 2005), and the teacher, too; all have their own desires, concerns and enquiries in play.

A personal learning design, working a 'feel for the stuff', does not set out to 'instrument the future', but is born of our present and situated attentions, as I have argued elsewhere (Parkin, 2020). Sure, what we attend to now serves the future (McKenney et al., 2015; Van Note Chism & Sanders, 1986), yet, as a situated and integrated part of teaching practice "attentive to the fullness of the moment" (Giles, 2008, p. 159), so too is learning design with the moment. And, just as what is truly educative cannot be known in advance, for learning is never what we expect it to be (Ramsden, 2003, p. 8), neither should we expect our designing of learning to try to foretell the events of learning. Indeed, to claim that one can 'design' learning is an arrogance. Teachers exercise their educational wisdom as 'virtuosos' of the moment, able to make judgments in-situ commensurate with the quality of their person (Biesta, 2015a, chap. 7). Teachers are sensitive to the relational nature of teaching, improvising their lessons in concert with the students. Why? Because the very stuff of their work is people in motion. They know when to give and withhold, whether to leap ahead or not (Spier, 2019), and how to take a stance of elegant 'rhythmic caring' (Waghid, 2019, pp. xi-xix and 72-74). Lessons, even when repeated, are responsive to the uniqueness of each situation:

It is as if the deliberative nature of this preparation starts again with each new class. While we can carry forward some good activities, readings, and our practical wisdom of educational processes, a teacher starts afresh with the new students. ... Teacher's readiness involves opening themselves to yet another group of students and the relational journey into the as-yet-unknown. (Kung et al., 2018, p. 56)

This integrative, iterative ongoingness and open-endedness of learning design work has been highlighted in a comprehensive, longitudinal study on teachers' designing by Sue Bennett and colleagues on academic teachers' design practices (Agostinho et al., 2018; Bennett et al., 2011; Bennett et al., 2015; Bennett, et al., 2017; Bennett, Dawson, et al., 2017). As a process, they write, designing occurs before, during and after teaching delivery, evolving, revising and elaborating with each iteration (Bennett et al., 2017). Indeed, we might better think of learning design as a perpetual practice, rather than an 'event' that stops and starts (Mishra &

Koehler, 2003; Mor & Craft, 2012). This is not a matter of neglecting to ensure completeness: Bennett and her colleagues (2017) found that university teachers deliberately leave their designs unfinished (p. 140). Such work is *felt practice*, entangled in the moods of its moments, and carried by experience, into experience.

Institutional learning design

In contrast to the livedness of a personal learning design, the institutional kind of learning design aims to establish, secure and install itself. This kind of learning design is concerned with explicit things that can be counted, named and claimed - with the production and dissemination of what Stephen Mulhall (2005) calls *ontic knowledge*; that is, knowledge of entities distinguishable one from another. Institutional learning design points to itself and declares what it is. It speaks in the language of empirical evidence, claiming a knowledge of itself by naming what it is and what it knows – it speaks *to itself of itself* in a self-informing and self-validating loop. (The definition of what is learning design lives here, as if it were a question to be answered. In this thesis, ‘what is learning design’ is not a question to be answered, but a question asked anew, from a new standpoint – ontologically, from within its lived experience.)

The institutional, ontic kind of learning design prospers through publication. This body of work is comprised, in the main, of educational theorising, accounts of learning interventions, case studies of innovation, and the effective use of technologies in education (see for instance Nieveen et al., 2006). It is true that socio-critical studies on the contexts for education and self-studies on educational practice help to balance the field with a thoughtful tone – (for this, see an overview in Dinkelman, 2003) but, by and large, educational research and the scholarship of teaching and learning (‘SOTL’) are certainty-seeking enterprises. New educational frames emerge, such as *networked learning* (Goodyear, 2004) and a *conversational framework* (Laurillard, 2013a), grounding new methods of teaching. New technological contexts for teaching must be also taken into account (see Bates, 2015; Beetham & Sharpe, 2007; Conole, 2012; Salmon, 2000, 2013). Indeed, much of the learning design literature is focused directly on the deployment and use of educational technologies. This is understandable, because educators are increasingly expected to adopt and ‘align with’ new technologies (Salmon & Wright, 2014, p . 53) and consequently, there is a genuine appetite for literature that asks and answers questions about how to use technology in

teaching. However, since each pursuit confirms knowledge of itself, the literature is a veritable cacophony of certainties, which, paradoxically, can have the contrary effect of bewildering those who in good faith pursue an evidence base for their learning designs. It may be too that the onslaught of SOTL concerned with the educational uses of technology is so prevalent simply because technologies bring teaching practices *right into* ontic form through the online learning environment, so rendering visible and explicit what was previously somewhat hidden in the bodies of the classroom situation. In technology, teaching and learning becomes a more tangible ‘thing’ that can be seen on the screen, mined for data, and yes, written about. But something else is going on here, something rather more sinister. In the ontic frame, teaching itself becomes an educational technology, a reductive practice “in which the only questions that can meaningfully be asked about education are technical questions, that is questions about the efficiency and the effectiveness of the educational process” (Bieta, 2004, p. 59); teaching becomes a practice of matching inputs and outputs (2015a, p. 1). We can think of all this as an institutional ‘economy’ of learning design, accounting for itself within an overarching culture of measurement in higher education (Biesta, 2017; Fitzmaurice, 2010; Skelton, 2009).

The ontic literature on learning design is dominated by the theme of structure. It is hardly possible to speak against structure, for structure always overcomes lack of structure by enclosing and containing it with its reasoning. The institution legitimises its knowledge by structuring it right in to its practices (Schön, 1995), and deploys this structure to assure our compliance towards ends already determined (Wendt, 2018). In the university, a language of structure *literally* rules the way we think about, talk about, and ‘do’ education; it is present when we speak about networks, frameworks, advance organisers, sequencing and chunking content, formative and summative assessments, learning outcomes, curriculum mapping, constructive alignment, a ‘consistent’ student experience, flexible options, feedback loops, and scaffolded tasks – and so on, and so forth. The banner for all this is the ‘constructivist learning environment’ (see for instance Seeto & Herrington, 2006), which collapses philosophical variations of constructivist (as per Piaget), social constructivist (as per Vygotsky) and constructionist (as per Papert) approaches. This umbrella worldview so dominates paradigms of education that it is all but assumed to be the ‘right’ way to think about how learning ought to be understood - including how it ought to be designed. Indeed, it is this

worldview that makes it possible to think about 'designing' learning at all. In this paradigm, the world is an object that acts upon me, or that I act upon, so that I might master it with my understanding (Biesta, 2015b, p. 238). If constructivism is based on a separation of world and mind (Feldman, 2002; Liu & Matthews, 2005), then it stands between my experience of the world and my being in the world. Yes, it seems to me that constructivism, when it is applied as an educative architecture, ironically undermines its own essential philosophy. But that is an argument for another day.

Availing ourselves of this ontic literature which circulates in publications, presentations, and institutionally-authored guidelines, we might wonder why these rational and authoritative accounts often seem so different from our lived reality of doing learning design. Where is the literature that speaks of our discursive and rambling non-practices, our hesitation and doubt, our flashes of knowing that seem to well up of their own accord? No, we do not readily write these felt or driven ways of being in our work. When we *do* write of our more 'arational' ways (Wendt, 2018), we write about them rationally. Rankin et al. (2016) demonstrate this perfectly, because the 'freestyle' designing they acknowledged as central to their lived design experience was, in the end, made sense of within a structure, captured as a 'freestyling pattern' (p. 26). Yes, ontic knowledge and its structure wants to have the last say! In these ways, and in so many more, we find that the literature has covered over the personal, lived reality of doing learning design. Have I been too harsh on the field? While it is true that any one learning design method or model may serve the individual as a doorway into fresh practice yielding new depths and new inspirations, my job has been to stand back and critically survey this body of work *as* a body of work. In this I observe the opposite force at play: the cumulative *closing* effect of a literature that does not, as a whole, care to ask difficult questions about itself.

Schisms reveal...

It strikes me as ironic that a personal learning design, while intimate, leans into the open, where the institutional kind, even while self-proclaiming, encloses and covers up. In any case, the teaching academic operates on some level in both worlds of learning design, though one may be favoured in their experience. For some, it is the institutional kind of learning design that fails to count in their reality at all. This may be in part because institutional

learning design is one of “the activities of the new technical intelligentsia” (Ball, 2003, p. 223), and as such disappears into the fabric of the working day, “ubiquitous, invisible, inescapable - part of and embedded in everything we do” (p. 223). We have simply grown used to it. We may willingly ask what it is we ought to do - even demand to know exactly what is expected of us (see Keesing-Styles et al., 2014). We may willingly forfeit our autonomous professional judgement to an evidence-based approach (Biesta, 2017):

Increasingly, we choose and judge our actions and they are judged by others on the basis of their contribution to organizational performance, rendered in terms of measurable outputs. Beliefs are no longer important; it is output that counts. Beliefs are part of an older, increasingly displaced discourse. (Ball, 2003, p. 223)

Indeed, we may blithely take the institutional metrics as our own, believing for ourselves - ironically! - that believing is not robust enough. Collectively, we habitually overlook the intuitive for that which is explainable, objective and legitimate (Herriott, 2017), and we are all, no matter what we believe, or how alert we imagine ourselves to be, to some degree invisibly swayed by institutional models of thought and action. Yes, the institutional kind of learning design can be a Trojan horse which hides its true designs; and, as long as it stays silent about its intentions, *its designs are on us*.

For some, institutional or management forms of learning design may figure negatively as troublesome, inappropriate or irrelevant ‘outsider’ interference impeding one’s work (Cross et al., 2012; Ellis & Phelps, 2000; Magliaro & Shambaugh, 1999, 2005; Salmon & Wright, 2014; Sloan & Bowe, 2015); a meaningless exercise in ticking the boxes (Sloan & Bowe, 2015, p. 130). Indeed, university teachers may actively *resist* goal-directed and prescriptive models, preferring the ‘ad-hocism’ of their work over structured approaches (O’Toole, 2015). Here is yet another expression of the global schism that characterises the experience of the academic as they push back against managerial ideologies that do not accord with their own (Winter, 2009). Stephen Ball (2003) calls this a “structural and individual schizophrenia of values and purposes” (p. 223), where what is at stake is the authentic and the meaningful in our work. What this situation amounts to, says Ball, is “the struggle over the teacher’s soul” (p. 217) in which the self of the teacher is delegitimised; where

the alienation of self is linked to the displacement of individual qualities, mechanisms of introjection, by responsiveness, external contingencies, the requirements of performativity. The result, inauthentic practice and relationships. Teachers are no longer encouraged to have a rationale for practice, account of themselves in terms of a relationship to the meaningfulness of what they do, but are required to produce measurable and 'improving' outputs and performances, what is important is *what works*. (p. 222)

No, teachers are not, and should not be 'technicians' of learning (Ball, 1995; Carr, 1984; Hultgren, 1987), and we should be wary of this trap, for in the performance of teaching, we risk a great forgetting:

It is one thing to acquire a stock of sophisticated teaching techniques and master the intricacies of modern technological aids; it is quite another to have the educational character of teaching as an ultimate professional concern. (Carr, 1984, p. 4)

Nevertheless, the organisation's designs on teachers, no matter how forceful, appealing or convincing they are, nor however readily or warily we take these designs as our own, do *not* 'disappear' the self. These things of depth and meaningfulness - things that rightfully belong to a concerned teaching – these things survive *because they are part of being human*. We cannot do without them, without we diminish our souls. The resistance we might feel towards structured approaches that do not concur with our own inner orders is a soulful refusal, and this refusal is potent for our work, because the etymology of the word 'refuse' is to give back, to re-fund, to '*pour back*'. We steal the things of depth and meaningfulness back in our own time, keep them alive as secrets whispered between us, far below the line of institutional sight (Churchman & King, 2009), and give them back undercover of our teaching.

In this regard, the schism is valuable, for it shows us that there *must* be two worlds of learning design; it shows us that there is something to defend, on both sides; and it shows us that all is not as it first seems. Yes, it is the schism that shows us the hiddenness of the worlds. The schism between the institutional and the personal is not a void but rich with givenness, for it shows us to ourselves, and to each other - intimately, furtively, earnestly. But the schism has another gift for us, for it shows us the intractable, untransactable and irreducible soul of our work. Without the schism this quiddity might remain for us an unconcern, invisible to our attentions. As Steven Segal (1999) writes, it takes a rupture for our practices to become "an explicit theme of concern" for us (p. 75). In this way, the schism confers an existential blessing

on us, for in its opening we see what is fundamental (Mount, 2003); some fundament that which turns both our work and ourselves. We may be tired and maybe even cynical, but do we not want our work to correspond at the deepest level with our self-being?

Let me make a declaration at this juncture. It is time to speak what moves us from within, the deeper realm, the soul, that singular well in each of us. We have a *higher* education to care for, after all, which, when viewed from underneath, is a *deeper* education. Why not speak from the soul, to the soul, for the soul? Why should higher education not be soulful – after all, we are hungry to be moved in an indifferent world (Greene, 1967, p. 166), and higher education might just be a place to be moved. Yes, without something like soul, our work is a performance haunted by “feelings of emptiness and longing” (Latham, 2001, p. 42). Surely some inner well nourishes our work; some sacred filament draws? If sincerity means following through to a deeper level (Sundström et al., 2014), then let us follow that rupture down and see where it leads.

The research turn within

The schism has revealed that there is indeed more going on than first appears. Yes, there is something more to be said about learning design which is not being said, something vital in this work that is hidden from view, difficult to say, and resists being counted. Yet it is there.

There are vital forms of consciousness lying, as it were, above and below the level of public knowledge and incapable of being wholly reduced to its forms and norms: the more or less obscure and fugitive sensations, perceptions, feelings, intuitions, intimations of the private consciousness, which are in part the raw material of public knowledge and in part are intractable to scientific method... These vitally important elements pass through the filter of the most resourceful and perfected science. (Blackham, 1952, pp. 45-46)

Learning design is alive with vitalities of these kinds, but for the most part they are empirically unrecognised and unreported. We might theorise, speculate and generalise, and we might understand these vital elements within their wider contexts, dialectics and narratives, but, as Allan Feldman (2002) argues, sociocultural framings of teaching work are not enough to account for the *differences* between teachers’ actions within the same given situation. Our ways of understanding teacher actions are incomplete: one’s own self-being is missing from

the picture. Here then, in the amorphous unspeakable blind spot, is where I locate this enquiry; here, I turn towards the intimacies of 'being in' learning design. I enquire by getting closer – I go 'narrow and deep' (Creely, 2018). Now, we can let go of 'kinds' of learning design altogether - for kinds is itself an ontic conceit - and turn to ask what fundament in us underlies those kinds.

The turn towards what underlies is both ontological and existential. In the Heideggerian sense of the term, 'ontological' does not mean categories of difference between entities, but rather, "to carry out the gathering of beings in respect to their beingness" (Heidegger, 1935-36/2002b, p. 133). We can think of this more simply as the pre-epistemological 'ness' of existential life. In everyday philosophy, a Heideggerian concern with the ontological is used to signal a concern for the 'being' of a person as that which stands prior to knowing. After all, we are, first and foremost, beings who teach (Bills et al., 2016; Davey, 2010; Denton, 1974; Giles, 2011; Hultgren, 1987; Spier, 2018).

The ontological 'turn' orients accordingly. In higher education, Ronald Barnett leads the charge, inspiring a veritable sub-field in the higher education discourse (Bengtson, 2018), (see chiefly Bayne, 2008; Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2007; Nørgård & Bengtson, 2016; Solomonides & Reid, 2009; Spier, 2018; Vlieghe & Piotr, 2019; Vu & Dall'Alba, 2014). As Barnett (2007) enjoins,

If, then, we are seriously concerned with students, a suitable vocabulary and a suitable line of inquiry have to embrace matters of 'being', 'self', 'will' and 'becoming'. How can these matters be avoided? If we are to tackle them, we are bound to embark on a philosophical journey, strictly, on an ontological journey, in which matters of student being are brought into view and engaged with. ...we are urgently in need of an ontological turn in our thinking about higher education and, by extension, in our research into higher education. ... Even though these matters and this way of trying to understand higher education have seldom been evident, they have a certain timeless quality to them. Whenever there will be institutions of higher education with tutors and students, matters of being are in front of us. However, these matters take on a particular resonance in an age of turbulence and uncertainty. For an age of turbulence and uncertainty itself imposes questions and challenges of being. (p. 9)

Ontological concerns for being, however, are not common in higher education parlance – even though this concern surely is a pedagogical concern. It may very well be, as Barnett

(2007, p. 18) points out, the 'substratum' beneath the cognitive concept of 'deep/surface' learning (for this, see Marton & Saljo, 1997). However, while the ontological turn is not a movement at scale *per se*, it is true to its own character, for it survives in pockets of *individual* commitment. What we need for this paradigm to thrive, says Barnett (2004), are dispositions of stillness, thoughtfulness, carefulness, humility, receptiveness, courage, resilience, and criticality (pp. 254-258). Perhaps these dispositions are already ours; the pockets we wear on the inside - undeclared, or covered over in our work, yet nevertheless our own? My take on the ontological turn is that it is a turn that each person must make *for themselves*. The turn, you see, is a perspective taken not 'upon' subjects, whether students or the field of higher education as a whole; instead, it is a perspectival turn of an individual *within* themselves. One turns to oneself, working from and to one's intimate substratum. The ontological turn, in this sense, is a lived recognition of the legitimacy and potency of the personal. And, since the turn is also existential, in that one orients to being through a compass of meaningfulness, I refer to this orientation as *onto-existential*.

The personal can only be researched in the personal mode. Yes, the question concerning the deeper nature of a personal, felt learning design cannot be asked from the orthodox 'observer' perspective, as if standing outside of the experience; but it *can* be asked from within the experience itself. There is no phenomenon 'out there' to gaze upon objectively – phenomena are either experienced as one's own, or they are hearsay. In other words, I must *myself* receive the 'reality' of things as they are given and are recognised *in myself* as true. Researching in this mode involves a deeply disciplined attention to the unspeakable and the hidden. What appears to the senses as phenomena can only appear by being present with what is already present, through "a certain attentive awareness to the details and seemingly trivial dimensions of our everyday educational lives... of the consequential in the inconsequential, the significant in the taken-for-granted" (van Manen, 1984, p. 36). In this mode of attending to ourselves we can sensorially sensitise to the motional or surprising *appearing* of phenomena, rather than their mere 'appearance', as it were.

Perhaps one of the reasons there is so little of this kind of research, is that it is so difficult to do. If we are to stand 'unbracketed' in our research (Schütz, 1945), we must ask how can this be done, for, as philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1958/2014) says, "being does

not see itself” (p. 230-231)? To enquire from and to *this* place, the place of our own ‘being’, we are surely standing in the research ‘blind spot’ (Dorst, 2008; Frank et al., 2019; Scharmer, 2009):

In our urge for knowledge and control, we’ve created a vision of science as a series of discoveries about how reality is in itself, a God’s-eye view of nature. Such an approach not only distorts the truth, but creates a false sense of distance between ourselves and the world. That divide arises from what we call the Blind Spot, which science itself cannot see. In the Blind Spot sits *experience*: the sheer presence and immediacy of lived perception. ... When we try to understand reality by focusing only on physical things outside of us, we lose sight of the experiences they point back to There’s no way to render ‘reality’ apart from experience, because the two are always intertwined. To finally ‘see’ the Blind Spot is to wake up from a delusion of absolute knowledge. It’s also to embrace the hope that we can create a new scientific culture, in which we see ourselves both as an expression of nature and as a source of nature’s self-understanding. We need nothing less than a science nourished by this sensibility for humanity to flourish in the new millennium. (Frank et al., 2019, para. 3-19)

Researching from the blind spot is intimate work indeed, and demands a particular methodological approach: an onto-existential mode of enquiring. Hermeneutic phenomenology is a perfect fit for this task, for it is a methodology of the hidden (Harman, 2007; van Manen, 2007, 2016b). Enquiring in this mode involves maintaining a stance of openness and questioning (Crowther et al., 2016, Willis, 2001) within a “circling discipline of reading, writing, talking, mulling, re-reading, re-writing and keeping new insights in play” (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1393). One maintains the revelatory cusp through a disciplined attention to what is arising not from the data, as it were, but in oneself.

It is one thing to open to and notice the intimacies of one’s practice from within it, but it is quite another to understand what is going on. To attempt a rational explanation of what is unspeakable, hidden, felt, and intimate in one’s practice further conceals the true nature of that phenomenon. What is needed is a different kind of question, one which is ‘uninterested’ in the unnecessarily limiting questions of rationality (Wendt, 2018). For this, hermeneutic phenomenology turns to philosophic thought for understanding (van Manen, 2007). For a more fulsome exposition on the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology, see Chapter three: *Inside hermeneutic phenomenology*.

Research focusing on experiences of designing in higher education is rare, however, a few studies stand out. Andrew Scown's (2003) doctoral work on the lived experience of being an academic foregrounded the sense of being involved with ideas, people, professions, and society within and across boundaries. Josh Spier's (2016) hermeneutic phenomenology of being a higher education teacher revealed 'being in conversation' and the temporalities of 'having-been' and 'possibility' as essential characteristics of the work. Research by Arthur Sloan and Brian Bowe (2015) on lecturers' experiences of designing curriculum revealed the tensions between the bureaucratic conditions for one's designing and the sense of obligation towards the students. A less careful phenomenology on the same theme by Roberta Albi (2007) on professors' experiences of doing instructional design merely argued the need for instructional design training. In a related field, phenomenological research on schoolteachers' lived experiences by a cluster of phenomenological scholars in New Zealand and South Australia also provide insights: the mattering of student-teacher relationship (Giles, 2008); the sense of 'learning togetherness' in a whole-school learning design (Bills & Howard, 2019); the importance of 'being seen' in one's teaching as central to teacher capability development (Bills et al., 2016); and a close look at what teachers self-identified as *their own* best practice (Kung et al., 2018). Such studies affirm the authority of experience (Munby & Russell, 1994) and, taken together, reveal the hidden world and the very personal nature of teachers' practice, even while that personal is relational and plural (Nancy, 2000).

Learning design 'as such'

While these and other studies focus on the lived experience of the teacher and the integrated nature of teaching and learning design, still the phenomenon of learning design *as such* is not present in the research. As long as learning design is integrated in teaching, it remains hidden. In this study I ask a question that has not been asked before: *how does learning design as such show itself to be?* That is, how learning design can be recognised and understood 'as such', *on its own terms*, as an 'undesigned' learning design. I invite the phenomenon of being in learning design to be untangled, if you like, from its background of practice contexts: from teaching and learning, where it is indistinct from curriculum writing, lesson planning, reflective and reflexive aspects of teaching, and so forth; and from institutional services, where it is caught up with aspects of management. These familiar

contexts, being so thickly layered with assumptions and ingrained habits of thought, make it difficult to bring learning design 'as such' into practice relief.

However, learning design also has another context, and this is *design*. Design lends itself to every world, as well as having its own. 'Design', as such, helps the phenomenon of being in learning design stand out rather less familiarly. It also opens a world of hiddenness. As I was later to learn, design holds within its ambit the paradox of open and closed, both covering and disclosing. By virtue of this held paradox, and of design's willing embrace of difficulty, design turns the 'problem' of the schism between the personal and the institutional worlds of learning design inside-out, and offers the struggle anew - as a creative tension already present and available in our educative work. Thus, this project pursues an understanding of what is learning design from the perspective of its being, somehow, 'design'. And when I say 'design', I welcome the semantic ambiguity. Do I mean the verb, or the noun? Both – and perhaps, more, for in this research project, the word holds open a space for itself. The way I use the word 'design' invites multiples and possibles to live together in open-edges unstraightforward entanglement. When I use it, I include in its ambit the designs we are already involved in; our conscious and intentional designing that is part of our teaching practices; our innately designful moves in our larger lives; and, not least by any means, the very soul of design itself, which may or may not show up in this enquiry's concern with what or where is 'learning design'. A 'design' in-of-and-as us, which, I sense deep down, refuses these categories, but is nonetheless 'there', lodged where our being and our doing are the same.

It is reasonable to think that there is something to be discovered about design in our learning design-type practices - after all, learning design by its very nomenclature claims itself as a form of design. Some scholars of learning and teaching hold that learning design could do more to advance itself as a form of design, and that it ought to learn more about itself from other design domains (Bennett et al., 2011; Gibbons, 2014; Mor & Craft, 2012; Rowland, 1993; Tracey & Baaki, 2014). But is it really necessary to speak of teaching or learning design 'as' design work? After all, teachers and designers as such have different worlds and it is designers, not teachers, that bring a design perspective like this to teaching (Magliaro & Shambaugh, 1999, p. 349). Nevertheless, there is something about design-as-such that draws.

For some, like for my colleague Jane, opening a world of design inside one's existing work can be a revelation:

I think for many academics like myself, what's design, they don't really understand it. But my personal experience of it is profoundly liberating. Profoundly. I've been looking for this ever since I started teaching and didn't realise it. (J. Haggis, personal communication, May 14, 2015)

But it is also true that we should take care when speaking the language of design. There is a danger that the language of design, when spoken inside a practice of teaching or learning design will simply introduce another layer of technicism to the work. Take for instance McKenny et al.'s (2015) technicist vision for an organised discipline of design in university teaching "using certain formal conceptual structures [and] certain explicit procedures.... underpinned by a certain formal body of knowledge and systematic ways of knowing" (p. 190) – surely a vision likely to repel social and hard science academics alike! There is a danger too that conceiving this work through a narrow window of design in which design is understood as a rule-based process, is bound to cover over what is really going on at depth. Such an approach may even be dangerously naïve, for design is a language of domination of nature (Orr, 2002). It is dangerous too, for while design can be explicit, it is also the master of hiddenness, hiding even itself from detection. Indeed, design as such *disappears* -

what occurs in design, disappears. Design is defined in terms of something else. With the possible exception of those answers which might be given through reference to design skills, design's significance appears to be very difficult to pin down and to be capable of rationalization only through reference to things outside of itself. (Dilnot, 1982, p. 140)

However, design has within its folds a saving *grace*: a *philosophic gaze* upon itself. Indeed it must, for design is a practice that walks the thin line between world-making and world-destroying. Is it too dramatic to suggest that learning design shares this responsibility? Might the philosophic gaze be, as I suspect, a way to understand both personal *and* institutional kinds of learning design, each in their own way - and perhaps even to understand them together, on some common, perhaps necessarily difficult ground? Why not try? Engaging with 'design itself' is a philosophic move that gives us a deeper understanding of what we are already doing in our practice (Galle, 2016, p. 323).

However learning design, as a form of design, does *not* have a philosophic orientation to itself, perhaps because it is a child of higher education, which is itself poor in a philosophy of itself (Barnett, 2017). As a 'field', wherein its practitioners might philosophically self-trouble and contest their work within a discourse, learning design is weak - so weak that, arguably, it falls short of being a field at all. Sure, learning design has its theories, but theories are not self-troubling; theories seek to close and define, and can work against philosophic thought, which seeks to open and to keep open. Consider the etymologies of the two: a theory shares its meaning with 'theatre', while the root meaning of the word philosophy is 'love'. Yes, with philosophic thought, I go beyond the theatre of spectacle, performance, narrative: *I am involved*. Asking about our learning design practices philosophically, we can ask about their deeper dimensions – and, perhaps, hear design's own address in the concerns of higher education.

My reading took a turn. The depth I was looking for in learning design did not speak to me in the ontic literature on learning design. I wanted to know what lay *beneath*; I wanted to have a philosophic conversation about learning design - so I looked to the design part of learning design. I bypassed the vast literature on design as technique, method, thinking style, rational science in the tradition of thought began by Herbert Simon (see 1955, 1969/1996), and I bypassed the arguments for design as discipline (notably Cross, 1999, 2001b), instead searching out the scholarship on philosophy of design. Here I found a literature that spoke its mind, opening to itself, asking *difficult questions about itself*, as well as advancing the discourses within which those questions are, or could be, asked (Willis, 2017). Reading the world of design philosophy with learning design in mind allowed me to break from the orthodoxies and assumptions about what 'is' learning design and to throw it wide open for new interpretation. But something else was happening, too. In the course of my reading I saw that design was telling me a deeper story about how we are as human beings. Design's address to me was existential, because it spoke to me about how I might deliberately and meaningfully 'be' in my practice. The address spoke of itself, too; of the importance of being addressed. I began to relax into my professional hunch that learning design's 'as-such-ness' lay in the folds of the design part of itself; or perhaps, in the way that design and learning dance together, as it were, in the university teaching context. It was here, in a hermeneutic

reading of design, that my research proper began, and it is documented in Chapter five:
Listening for design's own address.

Research aims: holding open, for its own sake

The research, then, has multiple, layered aims: the aims of educational research; the aims of the professional doctorate; the aims of hermeneutic phenomenology; and my own personal hopes and desires. I will explicate them separately, though they arouse each other. Broadly speaking, educational research can add to knowledge, improve practice, and inform policy debates (Creswell, 2002). It should also contribute to and open questions about human wellbeing (Hostetler, 2005). In terms of its particular contribution to the field of higher education, this project meets the call for more research into the lived experiences of university teachers' designing (Bennett et al., 2017; Goodyear, 2015; McKenney et al., 2015) through a sensitive exploration of the hidden realms of learning design.

As a professional doctorate, the research project is not antecedent to practice or action but already 'at work' in its field, already 'in' it. It is research that is active, grounded and concrete (Greene, 1977; van Manen & Adams, 2010). However, this does not necessarily mean that the professional doctorate is instrumentalist in character or intent (Boud & Tennant, 2006). After all, the doctoral project is an intensive learning project, and this learning runs deep; its impacts are profound, and occur at the level of one's being (Boud et al., 2020; Boud & Tennant, 2006; Creely, 2018; Wadham & Parkin, 2017; Wisker et al., 2010). The shift this kind of research makes begins within the researcher themselves "yielding moments of large insight as well as personal self-discovery" (Barnett, 2021); rippling from the inside out, both into and out of lived practice.

Accordingly, this project does not set out to transform anything, but instead, embodies and 'comes out of' personal transformation. Neither is it concerned with ontically constructing or acquiring new knowledge, but is concerned instead with the ways that knowing, doing and being are integrated in practice (Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2007). Indeed, instead of creating or claiming anything, this project actively *withdraws* from claiming and proclaiming any ground. Like my favourite philosopher Karl Jaspers (1961) says -

I do not show how to do things. I unveil no theory of what will happen. I take no definitive stand. I have no consoling final answer. I will indeed mention proposals, discuss projects for the future, assume occasional positions – but all this is by the way. I will try to survey our situation, but this, too, only in the possible perspectives. It will all remain in suspense. (p. 11)

Nonetheless, something may be inadvertently gained, for in the very action of withdrawal something ‘else’ is revealed, in the same way that a receding wave reveals what was already there. Accordingly, the ‘gap’ this research addresses is not a gap for filling; rather, it is a deliberate opening, and holding open, of new space. This kind of holding open is not ‘for’ anything, but *for its own sake* - for openness itself. As such, I aim only to offer something that might arouse an awareness of a different kind, as Isabelle Stengers (2005) says; something “intended not to say what is, or what ought to be” (p. 994). Yes, it is we ourselves, as practitioners of higher education, with our theories and constructions of what we think learning design ought to be, that obscure what might phenomenally present - if we were truly open to it.

The way the research is conducted matters a great deal. A phenomenology of practice’s modest aim is to nurture ‘thoughtful and tactful action’ (van Manen, 2016a). Now, in this most uncertain of times, educational research perhaps more than ever needs “thoughtful, emergent forms of inquiry”, ones that are “nuanced, caring, and aware of the transcendent nature of what we learn, what we seek to know, and what we claim to know” (Tobin & Steinberg, 2006 p. xxxix). Phenomenology, as an intimate form of enquiry (Creely, 2018), is indeed such a way, caring as much – perhaps even more? – about the way it attends as it does about the content of its attending. Whatever shows as meaningful in its findings is personal and provisional, suspended between the researcher and the audience (Galvin & Todres, 2012), and given as ripe for further interpretation, for each of us to take and think on as our own (Crowther et al., 2016; Smythe et al., 2008; Willis, 2004).

But for change to occur beyond the bubble of our own private practices, we need new ways of talking with one another about what we are doing and how we are enquiring; ways that speak the ontological (Robertson & Bond, 2005). The philosophic is the appropriate register for this work. The philosophic gives us a common ground for speaking with each other about what concerns us, what is difficult, what is meaningful, what cannot be easily

said, what is right, and what is good, what we love and hope for. These are the best conversations, are they not? The philosophic aims not for knowing, but for holding open about knowing itself; not for final understandings, but, as Jaspers (1957a) says, for *real* communication, that “consciously approached realm in which we all can meet each other” (p. 87). As such, this philosophically situated research ultimately aims, but through entirely idiosyncratic and humble means, to advance a social philosophy of higher education (Barnett, 2000a, 2017; Bengtson, 2018). - And so I arc back to the ‘field’ by way of the human fundament.

On a very personal level, I am carried by the belief that, somehow, *this work is an act of love and reclamation* - though I do not know quite what this means, except my project is work of love for the world (Hodgson et al., 2017, 2018). What homecomings, what outgoings, what turnings-around might come into being from the work of this project as it ripens into its words, perhaps even ripples into practice? But wait - offering the thesis as a gift, should I not withhold from minding what becomes of it? Yes, if a commitment is that which makes possible the task of seeking and accepting knowledge (Polanyi, 1958/1974), then my personal commitment is to stand openly in place and let what shows, show itself.

This, then, is the project: to open in such a way as to let learning design show itself as it ‘really’ is - and in that same place, to see ourselves there, already rich with inner practice, and to love what we do for what it shows of human being-and-doing. My labour is now to make a long return home, and to bring you with me on that journey.

Statement of significant original contribution to knowledge

When it comes to investigating university teachers’ own experiences of designing, there is only a “thin strand of inquiry” (Goodyear, 2015, p. 42). As far as I can ascertain, this study is the first to explore university teachers’ learning design outside of learning design’s teaching practice context in higher education, by asking about the ‘design’ part of learning design, and inviting learning design ‘as such’ to show itself on its own terms.

This research reveals our practices in ways not revealed before. Its findings offer new ways of understanding what is learning design from new perspectives: from the ontological perspective of the acting self who is already ‘in’ their practice; from the existential

perspective by asking what has meaningfulness and depth; and from the philosophical perspective by holding open for deeper exploration the meaning of what appears. It restores aspects of teaching in higher education that have hitherto gone unsaid, while at the same time valuing their intrinsic hiddenness. By this approach, the research demonstrates that it is possible to engage with what is intimate in a way that respects that intimacy without seeking to overcome it: it shows the hidden from 'within' its hiddenness, as hidden. Though I am shy to say it, I also think that through my attention to how hiddenness can be shown, I managed to find my own unique way into hermeneutic phenomenology, postulating an 'ironic reduction'. While this requires further thought, some may say this is significant. In any case, it is significant for me that I dared to propose it.

Certainly, this enquiry breaks new ground in venturing an understanding of learning design in the philosophic vein. In this more bare-faced, 'undesigned' understanding of what is learning design, new personal and shared practices become possible; ones that speak to the conscientious rather than the calculative. Such a refiguring is important if academics are to maintain authorship over their learning design practices; the alternative is that institutions will increasingly manage learning design through procedural and technical means. Understood through a philosophy of learning design, the schism becomes a tensional force for authentic and original educational creativity, thus transcending these tensions as 'merely' technical. And, understood more holistically, there is an opportunity to transcend categories of personal and institutional kinds of learning design altogether, perhaps to even develop a new 'in-common' understanding that celebrates these tensions as generative to practice.

DEUX

DEUX

Imprint from a dream.

Two: Bones of the enquiry

By reason of these things, then, the whaling voyage was welcome; the great flood-gates of the wonder-world swung open, and in the wild conceits that swayed me to my purpose, two and two there floated into my inmost soul, endless processions of the whale, and mid most of them all, one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air.

- Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

Like Ishmael, there floats in my soul a snow hill, my own grand hooded phantom, which I can barely name as other than me, so alive is it in me.

Now begins already the circling nature of the enquiry. Yes, I have in the previous chapter grounded my research in a deep concern, but this was not something I was able to do at the beginning of the project. At the beginning, all I knew was that mysterious forces were moving me. In this chapter, I describe in a more personal way how the enquiry came into view for me, how it took form, and how the research question arose. I sketch the underlying substantives, what the project attends to, what it leaves out, and the markers of quality that stabilise and guide its protean ways. These are, if you like, the bones of the enquiry.

Coming into question

In 2010, I came newly into the world of the university when I took a position managing a learning design service. I was an experienced adult educator, but naïve about what was 'learning design' as such. While I was intrigued to understand the 'design' part of my work, as it turned out, this aspect of the work was oddly silent in the work of it. I wondered why: was it taken for granted, or was it just too hard to say? Over time, my attention to the enigma slipped as I went about my business, and I found I did well enough with design, even though it continued to stay quiet about itself. Even so, the question of where or what it was continued to haunt my margins. I noticed that the more I 'flowed' with my learning design work, the more my work felt like oil on the surface of water - slick, but insubstantial. There arose in me an urge for *depth* - for real understanding.

With this urge, at the beginning of 2014 I pursued doctoral studies. The coursework component of my doctoral studies opened in me a critical eye to my work as a higher education professional, its contents and its contexts - and threw the whole of it into question. (See Appendix A: *'Fluvial meditations' poster*.) I was taken aback, because now, my work in learning design became suspect to me: I could see it for what it was - technocratic, instrumentalist, a rationale. It seemed that after all, my project had no depth or substance (what I did not yet realise was that here, in the very giving up of what I thought I knew, was my project). In the wake of this critical gaze I was left only with myself, looking at myself. This new 'raw' gaze seemed to be daring me to be truthful – both to the content of my enquiry, and to myself. Yes, I longed for depth, but I did not know its name. A breakthrough came one day as I chanced upon Ron Barnett's (2004) *Learning for An Unknown Future* in which he articulates the need for being-in-and-with-uncertainty. 'Being in' seemed to me to be a powerful way to ask about the learning design that I was already 'in', yet could not really see or say.

Around the same time my supervisors brought me into contact with hermeneutic phenomenology, and I immediately recognised a "goodness of fit" (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1391). Was I suited to this methodology, "comfortable working in the realms of uncertainty, ambiguity and mystery" (Welch, 2001, p. 69)? Yes, I answered, to the degree that I feel safe in the hands of my supervisors, who had prior experience in the approach. Here was a way of researching that made sense to me, a way characterised by openness, sensitivity, and creative insight (Crowther et al., 2016; Finlay, 2008; van Manen & Adams, 2010; Willis, 2001). It seemed a much gentler way of being in the world than, as Goethe observed, imposing a wilful understanding upon things, and trying to make them fit with us (in Naydler, 1996). I stopped trying to construct the enquiry and instead started listening. But still I asked myself: *what, exactly, is the phenomenon of my enquiry? And - what is 'a' phenomenon, anyway?* On my supervisor's advice I began to keep a blog, and in this way began to *listen by writing*. My posts were concerned with time, space, absence and motion, with the very bones of existence. My enquiry turned metaphysical, enormous – and at the same time, intimate, and intensely personal. Many, many times I declared "I've got it!" only to let it go again as some other insight bubbled up. (See Appendix B: *Example post from Research Ramblings blog*.)

Since then I have come to understand that there is no getting it - the phenomenon is not to be 'got' at all.

Yet it is there. Hard to name, known to me, too close to the bone to see or say.

But my enquiry was not just the pursuit of what was already there with me. It was as much about its being seemingly *not* there. In this mode of enquiring, I also began to ask *how* is the phenomenon hidden? And how could I pursue it, if it was not to be grasped even, in kind? I came to call my ghostly phenomenon *being in design* and in this way, brought it into its first provisional form (the 'learning' part came later). With the phenomenon of being in design now loosely in my sights, the research question had to be posed in such a way that invited the phenomenon to reveal itself as itself, as well as being crafted so as to be 'researchable' (Willis & Smith, 2000): it must find its proper words.

The research questions

The phenomenological enquiry is a method driven by questions, yet not seeking answers (van Manen, 2016a). The enquiry's questions are philosophical in nature (van Manen, 2007) and ask what is hardly even sayable - so they are questions that are *only just* possible. But the question *must* be posed, says Gadamer (1975/2004, p. 372). The research questions are posed in a way that is characteristic of hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry; that is, they do not ask for causal explanation (Giles, 2008; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2005), or for certain proof, and they do not seek to build a theory. Instead, these are questions concerned with the nature of being and the manner of things, and are onto-existential in register.

In this methodology, the research question is not fixed and leading, but is allowed its proper motion in which, as I enquire and as I come into new understanding, my new understanding changes the way I enquire. And, as I learn to ask the question more precisely - or more sincerely - and so the question itself changes (Moules et al., 2014; Smythe et al., 2008, van Manen & Adams, 2010). Even so, even while the words I have used to ask the question have changed many times, the overarching research question for this project has remained constant throughout, and it is this: *how does learning design as such show itself to be?*

Supplementally, I have preserved my original questions coming into the project, retained here as sub-questions – these are the questions underlying the research question; the questions that live underneath my skin, and they are:

1. *How does 'design' figure in learning design?*
2. *How is learning design distinct from teaching?*
3. *What does it mean, to 'be in' learning design?*
4. *How will I know the phenomenon when it appears?*
5. *What does all this mean for practice?*

Together, these questions guided every part of my enquiry – my reading, writing, thinking, conversations, interviews - even my professional work.

But the philosophical existential project has no bottom. Woven in underneath all these questions I am haunted by the “existential and unanswerable question” (Moules et al., 2014, p. 4) - I ask what it is to exist, what it is to be human, and what is meaningful about existence. Yes, the existential question is the one that asks *of me*; it is the question that I become (van Manen, 1984, p. 45). These larger questions exceed but also penetrate this thesis.

Edges: Delimitations

How can the philosophically based research project be contained if it is ever-opening? The containment comes via its methodology. Hermeneutic phenomenological research is *internally* bounded within a disciplined stance of ‘staying true’: true to the original impulse of the enquiry; true to the changing question; and true to what appears phenomenologically and its interpretation. In this way the project draws its edges from within, as it were.

I have also deliberately delimited some of the contexts for the phenomenon of being in learning design. In particular, the sector contexts for the university; the field of higher education; and the broader, holistic contexts for understanding university teaching. A focus on educational technologies is also excluded. Similarly, theories and methods of ‘learning’ and a deep dive into the literature covering methods and models of learning design are outside the project scope. These elements, while important for the richness they provide, ultimately distract from the main phenomenological task of looking afresh. As such, the delimitations I

have mentioned are methodological, as well as a means of keeping the dissertation within a reasonable word count.

Markers of quality

The basic tenets of quality in interpretive social research also apply to hermeneutic phenomenological research. Butler (1998), adapting from Madison (1988), includes markers of coherence, comprehensiveness, penetration, thoroughness, appropriateness, suggestiveness, potential, and internal and external agreement. Garman (1996) synthesised a different array of interpretive research qualities: verité, integrity, rigor, utility, vitality, aesthetics, ethics, verisimilitude (see pp. 18-19).

We can also ask about the way that markers of quality speak in the language proper to the methodology and its philosophies (Crotty, 1998; Garman, 1996; Schütz, 1970; Seale, 2012; van Manen, 2016a). Since phenomenological enquiry has grown up inside and alongside a diversity of natural and social science disciplines (Palmer, 1969), so too do the processes of phenomenological enquiring, analysis and communication signature the paradigms and languages of those disciplines. Nonetheless, whatever notions of quality are intrinsic to the research methodology, they must be made explicit so that the work can stand up to extrinsic scholarly scrutiny, even from outside that particular research approach. It is a matter of explaining what one means by those markers. For instance, the concept of research validity is couched in a realist scientific paradigm and does not, at first glance, sit comfortably with qualitative social research (Seale, 2012), and yet, as van Manen (2016a) points out, the root of the word 'valid' is 'strong' (p. 347) – and surely this quality applies universally to research, whatever its formal expressions? Let *strength* be the first marker, then. To this I add *truthfulness* and its echo, *ethical care*. All three markers apply across all aspects of the research design and its execution.

Strength

As with any research project, the hermeneutic phenomenological enquiry should aim to demonstrate scholarly strength through its design and execution. We would expect to see in its design a coherence between the methodology, its epistemological and theoretical approaches, and its methods (Crotty, 1998); or, put another way, between its underlying philosophies and its ways of knowing and doing. For doctoral research, the thesis should

demonstrate the researcher's ability to enquire and understand at the very edge of thought in their field – and as such, be strong enough to break new ground. In the context of the deeply interpretive genre of hermeneutic phenomenology, this means writing carefully and candidly enough that you can follow my thinking and see how I have arrived at my conclusions, even if your own conclusions differ.

The rendering of the phenomenon should also be strong, strong to evoke the phenomenon *as a phenomenon* in human experience. Its strength is not by strength of argument, rationale or facts; nor even by the force of poetry, but strong in-and-of-itself, so that the phenomenon speaks as directly to you as it did to me. A sufficiently powerful rendering of the phenomenon might be one that enters into your imagination – and then goes on giving, spilling through you into new questions, or new practice. The word 'render' is so apposite, because the root of this word is to give back – to *return*. Perhaps the phenomenon, powerfully rendered, might be a kind of phenomenological remembrance or confirmation in the reader's own experience?

Truthfulness

The hermeneutic experience is a disclosure of truth (Palmer, 1969). Truth lives and hides, unevenly and unpredictably, here, there and everywhere. It is potent in the philosopher's text, in a poem, a folksong, a symphony, a dream, or a conversation. Truth is intimate. When I meet truth, it feels as if it was always already there, though long, long forgotten. In the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology, truthfulness is onto-existential, because it is a deliberate stance constituted within existential horizons of meaningfulness. Heidegger (1954/1988) says that truth is ontologically something that we are 'in' (p. 18), a kind of clearing which "encircles all being... like the nothing that we hardly know" (p. 36). Jaspers (1938/1971) holds that truth is a state of being: "we grasp each given meaning of truth... with an awareness of [its] limits... *only to the extent that we are truly ourselves*" (p. 38). Taken together, truth can be understood as something one is 'in' when one is 'being oneself'.

How do I know when I meet myself in truth? It is as if I come into self-resonance – after all, we say something "rings true". Yet in truth I know I cannot *really* know, for

in the clearing there will always be light and shadow. Just as the trees hedge the clearing one comes to on the forest path creating shadow, which draws back into darkness; so our fresh insights will find the place of withdrawal. (Smythe et al., 2008, 1391)

Revealing and re-veiling: this is the play? Yes, I am always starting anew with truth, for I am always losing my 'self' in the experience of being myself. But as Jaspers (1951/2003) points out, it is not the having of truth but the search for truth that matters, for a search for truth is one "in which being itself is revealed" (p. 12); yes, methodologically, *it is the way I come towards myself in understanding*. If truth is always starting again, it is faith in truth that makes it possible to begin at all. So, for the phenomenological researcher, the task is not to 'find' truth but to *be* truthful; to see, enquire, think, act and write as truthfully as possible - even when truth is in the shadows, for that is truthful, too.

However, the matter of truth is not wholly personal. Another aspect of truthfulness in hermeneutic phenomenology is to do with external agreement – which makes it also an aspect of research strength, and it is referred to by phenomenologists as 'the phenomenological nod' (van Manen, 2016b). The nod is an indicator of *recognised truth* and is a literal, visible nod of the head. The nod is a marker of quality embodied in the audience, as it were. Certainly this marker is used to gauge how powerfully the phenomenal rendering might be. I have looked for the nod in conversations with colleagues, in supervision meetings, in my learning design workshops with staff, and in presentations on my emergent understandings throughout the course of my project - an ongoing process of peer review, in kind. Even in its written form, if it is written well, the phenomenological text will elicit a spark of recognition in its audience (Dall'Alba, 2009b; van Manen & Adams, 2010) – a silent nod, perhaps? Yes, the nod is how this methodology 'proves' itself: it proves itself *in you*.

Ethical care

My commitment to be truthful in my stance, my actions and my writings – to report my research honestly (Creswell, 2002) - occurs within a methodological and spiritual framework of ethical care. I take care that the wellbeing of participants or others coming into contact with my research is not compromised (Ali & Kelly, 2004). To this end, ethics approval for research into human subjects was sought and granted (approval #7174) from the *Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee* at Flinders University. Documents for use approved by the Committee comprise a *Letter of Introduction* from my primary supervisor

Michael Bell (Appendix C), a *Research Information Sheet* for potential participants (Appendix D), a *Consent Form* (Appendix E) for use in interviews, and the *Approved recruitment email text* (Appendix F).

Interpretive substantives

Incisively, Marion (2002) writes that the phenomenological project cannot be grounded in anything. Nevertheless, in the hermeneutic mode of enquiring, a project can never really be without ground: it must start somewhere in experience, even it is just with a hunch, until the phenomenon is cleared and standing on its own ground. In the meantime, the enquiry must methodologically hold the revelatory event in suspension. This holding quality is what I have come to refer to as the thesis' *substantive qualities*: deep constitutive notions that are present in the thesis, in the way that salt is present in seawater. These substantives act as necessary methodological agents and levers of the interpretation. They must be entirely of and proper to the thesis. They are the substantive of intimacy, and the presence of the 'and'.

The presence of the 'and'

The substantive of the conjunctive 'and' is present in every part of the research - but this was not always the case. My early writing imitated decisiveness. Even while I was diligently revealing the fabric of the thesis to contain rich entanglements of thought, ambient meanings, nascent possibilities, inherent conflicts, shadowy unknowns and so forth, I made the mistake of also thinking I had to forge from all this a coherent, single, preferred line of enquiry. Then one day, as I was reading a passage of my writing aloud, my supervisor David interjected, saying only one word: "– and -". I stopped short. Of course! His point was methodological: it was unnecessary to choose. The 'and' accepts and promotes non-duality, allowing things to rest together without imposing unnecessary ascriptions of causality, consequence, hierarchy or preference. The 'and' permits, preserves and promotes the fertility of contradiction, paradox and irony. With this seemingly tiny correction in place, I was able to interpret in a way that was methodologically proper to the task.

The substantive of intimacy

The substantive of 'intimacy' is part invocation, part mode, part quality, part stance, part reminder. For instance, when I bring intimacy to mind, I write more truthfully. Intimacy is present in every part of the thesis: the project's personal address; the deeply immersive work of writing; the intensely private way that the phenomenon appears - and, by extension, the 'intimations' for practice, gathered tenderly at the end of the project.

In the phenomenological literature, intimacy is understood as a special kind of relational betweenness, "the interiorities of self and other... safeguarded by the private" (van Manen, 2010, p. 1024), and it is characterised by presence, body, boundary, destiny, time, surprise, non-verbal communication, and transformation (Register & Henley, 1992). In the context of the nurse-patient relationship it presents as a rarefied form of love and caring (Dowling, 2004), shared meaning construction (Kirk, 2007), self-disclosure (Dowling, 2008), and vulnerability and touch (Williams, 2001). But it is somehow more universal than this – as Rupert Spira (2016) says, *all* experience is intimate.

The etymology of intimacy also gives a kind of access to its character. The word is rooted in the Latin for 'inmost', and also in 'make known, announce', which seems to suggest that intimacy is both deeply 'held' and *at the same time*, 'given'. I thought - perhaps intimacy is always somehow constituted in an 'and', not just relationally, between people, but ontologically, between myself and the seeming 'otherness' of the things of the world? Perhaps true intimacy "requires that intimate things remain distinct despite their closeness" (Harman, 2007, p. 146)? Yet there is an intimacy within my own self-being, too, which is a melting away of all that is 'other'... a felt sense of inward withdrawal, a return to my inmost, ownmost being.

Nearest myself, as if it can go no further, intimacy inverts dimensionally, and becomes vast. Bachelard's 'intimate immensity' captures this phenomenon. Writes Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* (1958/2014): "immensity is within ourselves.... [It] starts again when we are alone" (p. 202). He writes,

The great stream of simple humility that is in the simple room flows into ourselves. The intimacy of the room becomes our intimacy. And correlatively, intimate space has become so quiet, so simple, that all the quietude of the room is localized and centralized in it. The room is very deeply our room, it is in us. (p. 241)

Here is the reciprocal intimacy of 'inness': we are in the room, 'and' the room is in us.

This short poem from Rainer Maria Rilke (1995) also suggests just such an existential intimacy:

Ah, not to be cut off,
not through the slightest partition
shut out from the law of the stars.
The inner — what is it?
if not intensified sky,
hurled through with birds and deep
with the winds of homecoming. (p. 191)

Yes, intimacy is a quality of intensified presence that seems to carry something vast and lost back into the fold of my being. Perhaps intimacy is an affair with original belonging, an ontologic collapse - both an entry 'and' a return, a radical openness 'and' a phenomenal, intensified infolding.

Postscript: The ironical substantive

Now, looking back, I can see another substantive running like an animating thread through the thesis, and it seems to be the child of the other two, though it has its own indominable spirit. This third retrospectively witnessed substantive is 'the ironical'. And, true to itself - the mark of the substantive - the ironical lends its groundless ground to this thesis *ironically*; that is, it gives in the work 'after the fact'. In this regard, it is the ultimate groundless ground, is it not? The ironical is, if you like, a very insubstantial substantive that, in the same move both supplies meaning, and undermines it. The ironical *is* the immensity in intimacy, and the ironical has the last word on the substantive 'and', in that it both perfectly demonstrates it, and at the same time, destroys it with its intimation of a next order of understanding that leaves all understanding behind. Yes, there is something absurdly and inaccessibly truthful in the ironical's stretched and duelling internality – the iconic in the ironic, perhaps?

Don't ask for admittance into the sphere of its being - it cannot be gained through the asking.



Pictures of intimacy. By the author

Three: Inside hermeneutic phenomenology

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow.

- Wallace Stevens, *The Snow Man*

What are phenomena, and how can they be 'known'? This is the methodological question that underpins this enquiry. I have opened this question again and again throughout the project; I think I understand – and then, understanding slips away again – but *this is* the methodology, in character and in action. Yes, it seems that the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology must be experienced to be properly understood. It is practiced somewhat in the privative mode, where understanding comes in the existential wake of what is let go. One learns to recognise its character, but it takes time – this is a slow research methodology.

Hermeneutic phenomenology shows itself in the manner of itself; that is, it shows itself phenomenally and hermeneutically, both universally and specifically. Thus, I learn simultaneously what is 'a' phenomenon, and the singularity of 'the' phenomenon of my enquiry. Each understanding gives the other: as the phenomenon under investigation begins to show, by the manner of its showing I begin to understand the workings of phenomena and how they might be recognised as such. Likewise, as I come to understand this, I can orient myself more carefully to the phenomenon of my particular interest, picking it out, so to speak, from the shadows.

Ahead of Chapter four: *The methodology in action*, which brings these notions into concrete research action, this short chapter is a sincere *exposé* of the way that I have come to understand this powerful and slippery methodology. In it, I open my introspection for inspection, and lay out my own philosophic interpretation of what is hermeneutic phenomenology.

Yielding in the dark

Of this methodology, says van Manen (2015), one must “enter the space... where one is no longer oneself” (p. 251). Where is this space? Why, it is here, where I already am – only, it is nowhere that I know:

at the level of wild being the search for significance confronts us with nothingness (no-thing-ness). At the level of raw existence there are no “things”, only the darkness of the night from which all human insight and meaning arises. In the space of the text we witness the birth of meaning and the death of meaning – or perhaps meaning becomes indistinguishable from the dark. (p. 244)

Indistinguishable, yes. In the dark there are no things separate from me: I am all things, and nothing. It is as if I am inside out: my skin disappears, I am all viscera stretching out. Instead of closing me in, the dark seems to open me out. I know I am still ‘here’ but my ‘here’ is no longer limited to only that which I can see and touch. I am never more open than when I am in the dark.

I cannot see the dark – but I am seen by it.

If I want to know phenomena, I cannot know in the usual way (Bortoft, 1971). Like Goethe says (in Naydler, 1996, p. 106), I must use my ‘feelers’ of contemplation, divination and faith. Yes, this methodology demands a kind of thinking which must be experienced to be understood (Spier, 2016) – it must be lived. If there is a knowing, it is an ‘ontological knowing’ (Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2005; Smythe et al., 2008), collapsing being and knowing as one. But to live it feels more like *unknowing*, like surrendering; a way of yielding which in turn yields what could not otherwise be gained. I can but commit myself into a yielding state of letting come (Smythe et al., 2008), faithful that I will find my way by what comes my way. Why not? As Gabriel Marcel holds (in Mester, 1963), we are beings in mystery, and this mystery is not a problem to be solved but to be lived.

The less I know, the more there is to know.

But the question remains: it is all very well to let come, but how can the enquiry proceed, as indeed it must? Perhaps, as in the mode of Thomas Merton’s spiritual questioning, might proceeding come about by ‘taking down’, rather than adding to (Hart, 2006, p. 16)? I can understand it this way: something powerful and phenomenal has its

ownness, exudes its own givingness, and intimates that there is more of itself than can ordinarily be known. Yet whatever has its own light as such hides in plain sight in the day. So, to proceed in the enquiry, take down. Take away the distracting brightness and busyness of the 'day' of everyday, and release instead *into the same world*, but as night, which demands the sacrifice of what is customarily 'ours'. If there is a method at all, it is abstemious (van Manen, 2016a, p. 26). Yes, there is a radical humility in this methodology. Is this yielding in the dark the 'phenomenological stance' (Spiegelberg, 1970, p. 29)?

In the dark, the false day dies. In the dark, I lose my skin / without my skin, it all goes in. What is other is again mine, all the unknowable things, the passed over and forgotten things: they were always mine. What the days paints as separate, becomes illusion. Form is gone / all these things are One. Only the unseeable unsayable remains. The day is always held between these two thresholds of the night, where it all begins and ends, the spinning edge of existence that wears all faces, as if they are my own.

I am drawn onward only by draughty whispers, caught up as if beckoned. But there is no 'going there' to any other place, there is only 'being here' in a way that is 'more'. I wonder – since my experience of the world is not separate from the world (Crotty, 1998), is it by opening myself 'more' that might I experience 'more'? So then – 'proceeding' as such, arises in me as 'moreness'?

I cannot see it - but I hear it. It roars like an underground river, and rolls with feathery tremors across my bones. I can but wonder.

Phenomenology is a study of the hidden (van Manen, 2016b), to do with showing and hiding (Harman, 2007; van Manen, 2007). Now I am thinking, this way is not about renting the veil but seeing the veil, which is part of the phenomenal revelation. Harman (2007) explains -

concealment... preserves what is proper to the things. It not only withholds reality from us, but shelters it and lets it be, deeper than the thin facades through which they become visible to us. Concealment guards what is secret. Yet the concealment itself can also be forgotten, leading us to focus entirely on what becomes present. ... Humans are constantly torn between the secret and that which is accessible. (p. 93)

So, in a strange twist, while the phenomenological project requires a personal and deep commitment to openness (Finlay, 2012), I am thinking that it is *an openness to the ways*

of hiddenness. This is a radical stance to take, for to preserve the dark seems to run counter to a conventional research expository. But there is nothing essentially 'wrong' with hiddenness that it should be destroyed. To think that humans must bring forth into the light all the secrets of the world is a kind of existential conceit. Instead, I try to find another way; a way to enter into the nature of things more deeply and more truthfully. Not to conquer or destroy the shadows, but to show them for their exquisite intimate shadowiness; substantively, both showing 'and' letting be hidden.

But how can the hidden be shown, without it becoming 'other' than itself? Does showing hiddenness disappear hiddenness? On this conundrum van Manen (2010) has an idea:

the question of the meaning of the Hidden is not a problem that can be answered with solutions. When the intimate is exposed to the bright light of problem-solving rationality, then not only does the mystery disappear, but intimacy itself becomes ungraspable. ...The meaning of the Hidden in life can only be properly approached when one is able to grant the Hidden its enigmatic value, to let the secret of intimacy in all its variations be experienced as secret. (p. 1030)

Yes, "be experienced as secret" - to become intimate with the phenomenon as it shows. If I want to experience a phenomenon which is always half in shadow, I must let my gaze go soft, I must be twilight itself. I must become shadowy, if I am to know shadow: the knowing is nowhere, unless I am in the midst of it.

Hermeneutic geometries

Hermeneutic interpretation comes out of a tradition of reading ancient texts, human works of literature where the scholar tries to hear rather than read the voice of the text in an event of understanding (Palmer, 1969). By listening *through* the words, the scholar – originally clergy, who were literate and had access to texts – attempts to access the original meaning of what was written. - Then, could we say that hermeneutics is an interpretative technique that aims, ironically, to undo interpretations that have clouded over original meaning? Bachelard (1958/2014) puts it this way: "hermeneutics [rids] history of its conjunctive temporal tissue, which has no action on our fates" (p. 9). However, the hermeneutic action is not just reserved for the study of texts, ancient or otherwise, but is

‘implicit in all experience’ (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 370), whether I am reading a text, a map or the clouds; teaching, designing, working on a project, enquiring into practice, having a conversation, or writing a thesis; occurring “at such a basic and radical level that it cannot be dispensed with, cannot be rejected or accepted” (Snodgrass & Coyne, 2006, p. 45).

Since the hermeneutic action is all about understanding, hermeneutics is also the study of the phenomenon of understanding itself, as Palmer explains (1969, p. 10). Hermeneutics asks *what is understanding?* And, since it is my own self involved in this understanding, as Snodgrass and Coyne (1996, p. 21) press, all understanding is, at root, really a self-understanding. Then, is this the way that the hermeneutical enquiry interprets: the enquirer attends to the phenomenon of ‘understanding’ arising in their experience, and tries to understand why this experience is given as ‘understanding’?

Horizons

One of the conceptual devices for understanding hermeneutic understanding is the *horizon*, a “range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 313) and “within which something can become an experience” (p. 362). The horizon is also that within which existing meaning occurs (Palmer, 1969). For instance, *teaching horizons* provide bearings for one’s teaching practices, approaches, values, conceptions, and beliefs (Barnett & Guzmán-Valenzuela, 2017), and as such, are unavoidable, situated and dynamically in play. The horizon, perhaps, describes us?

In any case, there is no getting around horizons:

We always live, as it were, within a horizon of our knowledge. We strive to get beyond every horizon which still surrounds us and obstructs our view. But we never attain a standpoint where the limiting horizon disappears and from where we could survey the whole, now complete and without horizon, and therefore no longer pointing to anything beyond itself. (Jaspers, 1938/1971, p. 17)

Within horizons, I can only broaden my horizons by feeling my way to the edges of what contains me and wondering what exists outside my own experience. Heidegger (1927/2010) speaks to this when he writes that the act of interpretation projects understanding forward as possibility, and in bearing forward this way, interpretive understanding *comes into itself* (p. 144). This is to say - as I go along, I fold the horizon into my experience, and ‘come into’ understanding.

Centres

And yet even while projecting forward, understanding does not 'proceed' as such. The hermeneutic action might be constituted within its horizons, but it is an attempt, not to resolve or exceed horizons, but rather, to find the centre – like Heidegger said (Palmer, 1969), to attempt to “stand in the centre of the poem” (p. 157). The horizon, you see, moves as I move, and so, I am always already 'at the centre' of what I 'in'. Each moment and each situation is a new middle I find myself in. Intuitively, this feels right, for is not being itself 'round' (Bachelard, 1958/2014, p. 232)? Perhaps all of my existential experience is radial and concentric. In any case, remembering to stand in the centre saves me from the futility of reaching and grasping towards a 'something' that is other than me.

Yet there is motion: I stand on a moving point.

Circularity

But what is the vector of scholarly understanding within this methodology if my enquiry does not, as such, 'proceed'? What is the actual action of its motion? The hermeneutic action is said to be one of cycling between the whole and the parts (Gadamer, 1975/2004; Palmer, 1969): understanding one depends on understanding the other in cyclic, mutual reciprocity. Each gives the other context and meaning. For instance, to make sense of the text, one needs both the whole sentence and the individual words; meaning arises from the interplay (Gadamer, 1975/2004), the constant to-and-fro (Spier, 2016).

Oh, I but got methodologically stuck in this 'vicious' circling, as Heidegger (1927/2010) once described it! Two circling imageries had me caught. In the first figuration, I felt I was caught up in the same 'buffering' circle which appears on my computer screen to indicate background loading – surely a portent of imminent failure! In the second circling image, I am forever running backwards on the outer rim of an enormous turning wheel as it barrels forward. The metaphor of the hermeneutic circle was simply not working for me.

Similarly, the hermeneutic geometry of 'parts' and the 'whole' entrapped me for a while, because of the association of 'parts' with 'fragments'. It is really not like this at all. The whole is not a more complete 'thing' made of the sum of its parts. Physicist David Bohm (1980/2002) explains that the whole *manifests wholeness in each of its parts*, in the manner of a hologram (p. 182-186), and describes the whole as the universal flux out of, and in which,

all things arise and dissolve. As such, says he, the whole cannot be grasped intellectually; it can only be experienced receptively as a 'way' orienting coherently with reality.

Holding in tension

It is easy to fall prey to too-simple 'geometrical' superstitions and intuitions (Bachelard, 1958/2014) - even when they have motion. I needed to find another way of understanding the hermeneutic action that honoured and strengthened my 'existential capacity' to work with paradox and contradictions (Fisher, 2011), as is fitting for this way of knowing (Smythe & Spence, 2012). The action, I realised, is without geometry or vector: if it has motion, it is *tensional*: a hum, the vibration of existential *is-ness* and *not-ness* locked in a cosmic embrace. Perhaps the methodological gift of the figurative hermeneutic circle is that the circle supplies that 'concentration', that intent. Is the circle a magic Circle, a world within a world, a space in which to energetically intensify and make sacred existence? Or is it a remembering what is already understood (Snodgrass, 2001)? Certainly, there is something powerful about hermeneutic knowing that seems to draw on deeper laws. van Manen (2016a) described the action of the hermeneutic way as a constitutional tension between order and disorder, a way that is "ordered on a radical disorder" (p. 72). Indeed, the hermeneutic, as a stance, is perhaps *the only* position from which to bring tradition into question (Heidegger, 1923/1999, p. 13). And, since nothing is taken for granted in this approach - including the approach itself - it is always methodologically breaking ground, and as such, is truly radical. Certainly, this unorthodox mode of understanding does seem to permit a wildness within its rigour.

Yes, I am beginning to understand that the turning action of the hermeneutic is not so much a cycling as a turning away and then returning (Crotty, 1998; Thomson, 2001); an overturning, a turning differently, a turning inside-out, perhaps a turning point in understanding - a revolution of the most intimate kind. If it is a circle, it is a circle that *holds open a space*, for the hermeneutic is a question that embraces the question and its limits as one.

Phenomenal encounters

In the event of a phenomenal encounter I am struck by something (Marion, 2003; van Manen, 2016a). The stroke of its force "leaves one speechless; it leaves one with no way to

escape it; in the end, it leaves one without the choice either to refuse or to voluntarily accept it” (Marion, 2003, p. 98). Even though I know not what this is, I have been taken in by the event of its arrival into my experience. I do not understand what has happened, is happening yet the very ungraspability of the thing is precisely what makes it striking (Gadamer, 2006, p. 67)!

Yes, just as hermeneutics is concerned with the nature of understanding, so too is the phenomenological enquiry concerned not just with the phenomenal character of particular things, but also with the way that phenomena appear at all; the phenomenal ‘modes of appearing’ (Spiegelberg, 1971, pp. 684-688). But what if the mode and its content were the same? In Marion’s phenomenology of givenness, the distinction between the what and the how of appearing collapses: the phenomenon is understood *as* givenness. The phenomenon, explains Marion (2016), “is accomplished according to its mode of appearing” (p. 46). In other words, showing *thus*, it *is* thus. In this way, phenomena give themselves to be in the manner of themselves. Methodologically, it seems to me that it is the ‘how’ that gives access to the ‘what’ - for instance, intimacy showed itself intimately, as if quietly pressing me from the inside. Thus, the phenomenon ‘gives itself away’, so to speak, by the way that it gives.

With this ‘eventful’ phenomenology in mind, I examine in slow motion the moment of phenomenal encounter. I do this from two overlapping perspectives: the existential givenness of things, and the phenomenal experience of the self.

Existential givenness of ‘things’

The vernacular expression “it’s a thing” is a meme that testifies to the existential reality of phenomena. To call something a ‘thing’ attests to its undeniability. A ‘thing’, says Hegel, “possesses intrinsic being” (1807/1977, passage 120): a thing *exists* – and to exist, etymologically, means to step out, to stand forth; to emerge from the silent background of what we take for granted into the senses (Harman, 2007). Yes, a thing differentiates itself, standing forth on its own terms with a truth that is proper to it. A thing is also a whole unto itself, according to Heidegger (1935-36/1967, p. 34). And yet perhaps it is not that clear cut, for it also seems to be, as Goethe says, that “one thing is always permeated, accompanied, covered or enveloped by another” (in Naydler, 1996, p. 60). How can this contradiction be

understood? Is there a substantive 'and' here? Perhaps what we call a thing is that which grants us a glimpse of the lively entanglements of existence?

That is what I mean by a thing [: it is] a 'going on', or better, a place where several goings on become entwined... a knot whose constituent threads, far from being contained within it, trail beyond, only to become caught with other threads in other knots. Or in a word, things leak, forever discharging through the surfaces that form temporarily around them. (Ingold, 2010, p. 4)

Discharging themselves, giving themselves. Yes! *There is a phenomenal pouring-forth, a welling up*. Oh, this realisation makes *me* well up – tears come to my eyes! To be overwhelmed by the pouring-forth is to be caught up in a sacred e-motion. What is revealed is not a deeper layer at all (Marion, 2003, p. 103), but *givenness itself*. Marion gives the example of a painting: what is being given is not the painting, not even the experience of the painting, but the givingness of the painting that meets me.

The phenomenal experience of the self

Givenness is primary, explains Marion (2002), because givenness gives both object and being. Yes, Marion's givenness is so original that it "gives itself from itself and so as a self" (2003, p. 98). But here is the real phenomenon: in the event of being struck, the 'self' of the phenomenon reveals *my own self*. In this moment of existential shock, the "I" of me surprises me - and I experience just a glimpse of my 'being', a pure self without ground or subject (1988, p. 180). The encounter presents *me* to *me* in profoundest intimacy – not just through my senses, but intuitively, psychically, emotionally, corporeally, and mystically. By this means I am 'claimed' by the phenomenon and given back to myself, momentarily dispossessed of my ecstasy (p. 179).

Here, in this moment of self-encounter, says Richard Zaner (1970), "the self is at once the discoverer, the discovered, and discovering" (p. 181). Here, the self stands out to itself in 'intense immediacy' and experiences itself 'as such':

I am present to myself, given to myself, but not in a passive manner, for I participate in my own self-givenness and in this sense am not so much "give" as "gift" to myself I "receive" myself. The "I-am-me" and related experiences are moments in which I become *phenomenon* to myself; I encounter my self *as and solely as* that whereby I am myself. (p. 180)

In the moment, there is self-recognition, a sense of “having been me all along” (Zaner, 1970, p. 181). Yes, I literally ‘mark’ myself in this moment of phenomenal self-disclosure – I think: “remarkable!” Momentarily recalled to myself, I am again part of the phenomenating universe experiencing itself. I think - experience is not ‘of’ phenomena – this experience *is* phenomenal! In the remarkable moment of encounter I am revealed as a thing. But what kind of thing? Thus, I become a question to myself. Is this not the existential project?

Yet for the most part, says Heidegger (1927/2010, p. 34), phenomena are *not* given. This is the paradox of phenomena: that in the standing-forth of a thing and of the self, what is revealed is - the hiddenness. *It is hiddenness that gives phenomena*. Indeed as Marion (2002) says, events of phenomenal ‘showing’ are only possible due to their being hidden, and it is through this very hiddenness that a phenomenon assures and confirms itself ‘as’ a phenomenon. If what is ‘appearing’ to appear is indeed a thing, it comes to presence “shadowed by a bottomless depth of concealed reality” (Harman, 2007, p. 49). Well then - a phenomenon is like an iceberg (Bortoft, quoted in Wahl, 2017, para 85), for when I am struck, I am struck *deeply*: I am struck by the realisation that there is more going on than I know or notice, and there is more to me. Like my partner wisely observed, *if a thing is truly ‘something’, there will be more*. What have I discovered about the nature of phenomena? That by their entangled thingness, their welling up, and their hiddenness, there is ‘moreness’ for encountering.

Meaning-fulness: phenomenal-hermeneutic involvements

Having a phenomenal encounter is one thing - understanding it is another. To understand the phenomenon requires of me a sustained involvement in which I find if the phenomenon is indeed something with moreness, *it continues to arrive*. There is ‘more’ to be experienced before I can make sense of things. As a researcher I put myself in the arc of the phenomenon deliberately and explicitly (Marion, 2002; Segal, 1999), and I commit to stay with it, to become one with it, and so existentially realise the phenomenon’s meaning in me.

The phenomenon and I meet, as it were, on the ground of meaningfulness. Indeed, the phenomenal encounter is meaningful in itself, because in this event, something *profound* happens – ‘profound’ meaning, etymologically, something coming forth from the depths. In contrast to denotive or representative meaning, Polanyi (1958/1974) calls this phenomenal

kind of meaning ‘existential meaning’ – meaning that phenomenal things *possess in themselves* (p. 58). But, since I am dynamically part of the phenomenating universe, I am also phenomenating, and I am welling up and pouring-forth in intrinsic meaningfulness. In this way the experience of meaning might be thought of not so much as something which happens ‘to’ me, but something that I am involved in. There is nowhere else for me to be except that I exist in meaning (Sheehan, 2014, p. 254).

A reversal is called for. While this meaning is, as Spier (2016) says, already ‘ripe’ (p. 280) – that is, full in itself – it is nonetheless not fully available to my experience, just because I put myself deliberately into its arc. Instead – and here it is where meaning becomes methodological – instead it is *me* that has to become more available to this existing meaning. I must become ‘more’ of myself ‘and’, in a strange existential twist, ‘more’ open. Yielding, I gain. Less and more are dancing!

As the initial shock of contact and the profundity passes, whatever meaning was given fades like a shadow into the night. Now comes the disciplined hermeneutic phenomenological task of (re)giving that phenomenal encounter anew. The hermeneutic work of understanding asks me to trace back from appearance to what is ‘at heart’ and ‘at stake’ (Marion, 2016, p. 46). I must in faith return *again and again* to this core, and with each dip and dye strengthen the depth and fullness of my understanding. I begin to know the phenomenon on its own terms, recognising its signatures in my experience. As such, the shocking immediacy of the phenomenal encounter is deliberately followed by following meaning into its fullness. This cannot be rushed:

We grant to the thing, so to speak, a free field in which to display its thingness quite directly. Everything that, by way of conception and statement, might interpose itself between us and the thing must, first of all, be set aside. ...this allowing ourselves an immediate encounter with the thing is something we do not need either to demand or to arrange. *It happens slowly* [emphasis added]. (Heidegger, 1935-36/2002b, p. 7)

In this slowing and deepening hermeneutic action, phenomenal understanding does not accumulate; rather, it acts back on itself, and comes into itself with *new weight*.

It is the same with understanding the methodology itself. In the end, understanding hermeneutic phenomenology can only really be understood hermeneutically and phenomenologically. It is not a matter of getting one’s head around what it means before

plying it into formal research action, and it is futile trying to rationalise it as a process. Nonetheless, one must start somewhere, and grappling with hermeneutic phenomenology's deeper strata is good foundational work for the task. So, in *this* hermeneutic phenomenology, at *this* point of time, for me alone, I can say this much: phenomenology is the concern with the existential givenness of things, and hermeneutics with the ontological understanding of that givenness in terms of its meaningfulness.

There is no arrow. Only the pendulous lope, swinging gravely back, arcing always back, back towards itself, which I find is always myself, again and again it is full, exceeding even excess, moving fatelessly inward, to pass without gifts or flaws, just plunging and tolling, endlessly rolling, returning and yearning, a longing for One.

Four: The methodology in action

I said 'You cannot measure the individual?'

Hans said 'No.' Then 'The individual is sacred. The individual goes his own way.'

- Nicholas Mosley, *Hopeful Monsters*

All social research - including hermeneutic phenomenology - must declare and account for its choices (Crotty, 1998). But hermeneutic phenomenology is strange, for the contexts, methods, and substantive theories that usually give a research project its solid ground – all this must somehow make sense within a paradigm which refuses any construct that might obstruct a clear view of the phenomenon itself. As Jean-Luc Marion (2002) puts it, the phenomenological enquiry must methodologically establish “the conditions for its own disappearance” (p. 9). This means that the research must not only take great care not to filter, distort, force or construct the phenomena of its enquiry, but it must also positively take into its design the means for extinguishing the artifices of its own design: the project, as a project, must ‘disappear itself’ if it is to let the phenomenon speak itself. How this ‘un-conjuring’ trick can be achieved is not something that can be understood until one is actually engaged in the task of bringing the enquiry to bear in lived reality.

In this sense, the hermeneutic phenomenological research design is both the barest of philosophical skeletons, and the formal record and confirmation of the choices made along the way. As such, in this methods-like chapter, I cannot account for the activities of the research as if they were a prescriptive procedure that I followed. Instead, I retrace my steps, accounting for the way I went about things – a ‘method’ in reverse, coming out of itself as I went (Crowther et al., 2016), as my personal understanding of the methodology deepened, and I began to see what I was doing.

What did I do? In sum: I sought and gathered stories from participants in interview, and crafted stories from their transcripts; I poured myself into initial interpretive writing; discerned the phenomenal themes or essences through a strange ‘ironic’ reduction on the

text; and finally, turned to the philosophers to help me in the task of rendering understanding anew with an onto-existential interpretation.

Starting in the middle

This is not really a tale told from start to finish. Jaspers says:

We must always begin, so to speak, in the middle, whence we proceed backward and forward, outward and inward. In this we are driven ahead by the challenge to ask for the presuppositions, the pre-givens, the pre-conscious. But in order to be able to ask, we must first of all jump into the midst and begin factually to see where and how we are. (Jaspers, 1957b, p. 803)

I begin amidst the fertile forest of my beliefs, opinions, assumptions, understandings - all the tangled 'meaning structures' of human being (Barnett, 2014; Dahlberg, 2006; Steinbock, 2003; van Manen, 1984). Unlike Husserlian phenomenology, in hermeneutic phenomenology, I acknowledge that I cannot divorce myself from these meaning structures and bracket aside my presuppositions (Hycner, 1985), biases (Harman, 2007) and prejudices (Gadamer, 1976). How can I stand aside, if I am to leap in with the whole of me - including my emotions and passions (Cunliffe et al., 2011; Smythe et al., 2008; van Manen, 2016a)? – After all, the root of the word passion is 'parti', *to experience*, and it is lived experience that powers this project. Even if I were able to, I would not wish to divorce myself from what is personally meaningful, for tangled up in this fabric of all this are the threads of my "initial directedness" (Gadamer, 1976, p. 9) which, when tended for their intrinsic value, continue to give and guide, and enduringly sustain my project. No, instead of attempting to turn away from my meaning structures, the discipline in hermeneutic phenomenology is, as much as possible, to turn towards them. If I am to let go of my suppositions and superstitions, I must have them before me.

So, I begin with the declarative work of 'making clear'. I make my initial understandings and ideas about the phenomenon in question explicit by writing them out – an exercise in research transparency. This is what I declared: that teachers are already designing, by any name; that teachers design 'experiences'; that teachers are also 'end users' of their designs (a horrid term that now repels me); that teachers are in a cycle of designing; that design is towards the future but happens now; that design is towards some 'thing' in

particular; that design hides itself in the designed thing; that a design can be good or bad; and that there can be too much design, or not enough. The methodological intention is that, having named them, it is less likely that these notions will ‘creep back’ into my thinking (van Manen, 1984) without my being aware of them. I can also look back and see how my understandings have changed. (For a full accounting, see Appendix G: *First understandings*.)

The declaration of my initial understandings brings the existential prerogative of *choice* into play. Now I can turn towards myself in question, and hold these meanings open for what they might yield – or let them slip away, as the case may be. I do this not once at the beginning of the project, but *continuously*, within a stance of openness; I learn to see myself seeing, I suppose. So, while I continue to hold my beliefs and ideas about the phenomenon, I do so more gently and loosely, as if I am holding a butterfly. Later, as I come into understanding anew, I might find that I ‘knew’ something all along, though it was warped by conventions of how I thought it should be thought or said – like the term ‘users’.

Understanding a-knew?

Stories of experience

In hermeneutic phenomenology experience is primary. Since the locus of experience is in the individual (Feldman, 2002), experience, in its immediacy, is difficult to access. Stories, however, can give us “an invitation to experience and a clue to experience” (Blackham, 1952, p. 63). Accordingly, the research design included working with stories of lived experiences of being in learning design. I looked to broaden my own experiences with the experiences of others – I wanted to open a world beyond my own immediate horizon (Spiegelberg, 1970, p. 29) and encounter the phenomenon in ways I could not have imagined from own perspective alone.

In this project, the stories told by the participants are not used as case studies, nor as textual data to be plumbed for themes. The stories are not themselves ‘analysed’ for understanding. Instead, the stories provide access to the phenomenon from diverse angles, and each story gives flesh to new understanding.

Gathering experiences

I collected the stories early in the project, whilst undertaking doctoral coursework. These stories accompanied me throughout the rest of my candidature, heightening and amplifying my attunement to the phenomenon as I went about reading, writing, working and thinking. The stories allowed me to richly 'test' my own experience through attention to what was not my own experience (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 94). Conversely, as Polanyi (1961) says, my awareness of the particulars of others' lives became pointers for my own awareness. Over time I became more and more involved with 'my' stories; I 'lived' them - not vicariously, but actually: they *became part of me* (Polanyi, 1961, p. 470). Bachelard (1958/2014) explains that this is the phenomenologist's task: to take what is given 'just as it is', and then make it his own (p. 242). Yes, and by doing so, I was given the ironic gift of finding in my own experience that which shows that there are other things in the world beside my own experience.

But to begin again with recounting my process. I began by looking for suitable storytellers to interview. According to the criteria I set out in my research ethics plans, the research participants needed to self-identify as academics with recent experience in developing teaching and learning activities. An additional criterion was that they should not be academics working at my home institution; this was to avoid potential complication between my dual roles as learning designer and doctoral researcher, a condition stipulated by the University's Ethics Committee. The recruitment method was intended to occur through a process of snowball sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Goodman, 1961), a method of rippling referrals. To initiate the cascade, my supervisors approached their network of colleagues with an invitation to contact me to express their interest in participating, following self-identification against the criteria. However, on contacting me, when I checked with them against the selection criteria, all confessed to having some form of employment with my home institution - but explained, in various ways, that they were free agents with histories and allegiances lodged in multiple locales, and besides, their design work *carried with them* and was not bound by their present institutional context. Here was my first insight - before the interviews were even held! - that one's being in design is *one's own*, and moves as you move. In discussion with my supervisors, I relaxed this criterion and set up the interviews, aware that I needed to include protocols to manage potential complications to the research that might arise from our current shared university membership.

I was careful with my preparation for the interviews. Telling ‘pre-reflective’ experiences untainted by conceptualisation or theorising (Giles, 2008, p. 59) is harder than it sounds. As humans we have stories “built in to [our] very being” (Bateson, 1979, p. 14), and our stories are replete with meaning-structures - we rarely tell stories that have no meaning for us, after all. Added to which, as Bertrand Russell (1948) observes, human language is conditioned on all sides by theory and reason, and when we try to say what was rich and alive for us at the time of the experience, it “turns out to be abstract and dry” (p. 19). With this in mind, I aimed to sensitise my feelers to the presence of ‘experience’; I was myself interviewed by my supervisor Michael, as well as conducting three practice interviews of my own, paying close attention to the whole process from interview preparation, elicitation of stories, recognising ‘experience’ in the text, and then crafting and interpreting the stories. (See Appendix H: *Extract from Researcher goes first*, and Appendix I: *Report on practice interviews*.)

Listening to people’s stories is an act of intimacy and the interview environment should be set up to promote a sense of safety and trust conducive to disclosure. I met each interview participant one-on-one in a location of their choosing. Each interview lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. We began with friendly introductions. I then summarised the research project and asked if there were any questions; explained the interview process and subsequent steps; made explicit the delineations between my dual roles as both doctoral researcher and professional learning designer at the University; and set out the protocols of disclosure and consent in accordance with my Ethics Agreement. I made a point of declaring before the interview formally commenced that everyone has a different understanding and experience of being in design; there was no ‘one’ or ‘right’ way to think about it. Then, I improvised a short descriptive recounting of an experience of my own, to concretely illustrate the experiential tone of the storytelling, descriptively evoking the particulars of the occasion in the present tense, as if re-living it. I explained that I might, at times, need to gently ask the participant to return to the concrete experience, if they drifted too far into theorising or abstraction. I then began the audio recording. (See Appendix J: *Interview guide*.)

My pre-prepared interview guide included a short list of question areas which I considered might elicit recounts of lived experience. However, I quickly found that some of my prompts were grounded in a conception of being in learning design that did not seem to

marry with what participants were telling me. For instance, I had a prompt for a story about reaching a point of completion; but the participants told me experiences that rambled one-into-another - no completion, no starting points! I listened and learned, and refined my questions as I went, both in real time during the interview, and between interviews. I found it was helpful to prompt for currency and recency. When stories became reflection, I asked the storyteller to zoom in, pause, or colour in the moment – to return to the moment of experience. I knew when the stories were ‘working’, phenomenologically, because I noticed the phenomenon ‘flashing up’, like a something glimpsed on a computer screen that was loading, as it were, in the background.

Looking back, something else was going on that was important. At the time, I was referring to ‘being in design’ rather than ‘being in learning design’ because I was searching for ‘design’ as if it were a thing that might exist independent of its context. I have since come to realise that this is not so: *this* kind of design, at least, is in fact complexly constituted in, if not identical with, its context of ‘learning’. However, the separation of design and learning actually seemed to favourably disrupt pre-conceptions of what learning design was ‘meant’ to be, and rendered it strange enough to stand out *as itself*. It seemed that asking for stories of ‘design’ allowed something fresh and personal to appear. To illustrate: At the beginning of the interview each participant declared quite spontaneously that *they did not know what design was*. As research participant Astrid (a pseudonym) said: *“But I don’t think of it as designing, to be totally honest. The word design would be new to me, in applying to this.”* I wonder if I had asked for stories of ‘learning design’ instead, whether I would have heard stories about a more institutionally-framed learning design? Equally intriguing was the fact that all the participants had self-identified for participation as having stories of designing, even while declaring that they did not know what designing was. I wondered what it was they were going to tell me! I said *“that is fine. Tell me a story anyway”* – and they did. Yes, I thought as I listened, there is something here!

I digress from the process just a little longer because I want to note two more phenomena of the interview process, and they are both to do with intimacy. The first is the way that participants sometimes dropped into a whisper, candidly sharing confessions of ‘not knowing’ (not knowing what design ‘is’, for instance). At the time I was troubled by it, but looking back, I am glad, because these whisperings of the unspeakable signal that there is

something *truer* going on; something that lives below the radar of the institution that is somehow safe-harboured in these secret stories told person to person (Churchman & King, 2009). The second note-worthy phenomenon was this: reflecting after the interviews, the participants, each in their own way, remarked that telling their stories awakened them, so to speak, to design. I wondered if this self-revelation might make a difference to their work, going forward. But this is another enquiry altogether.

My aim was to gather 60 stories from participants (the 'data set'), interviewing via the snowball method, until I had reached this number. However, the participants were so rich and generous with their experiences of being in design that in the end I needed only five interviews to meet my target. A sixth person was also interviewed, but I decided not to use these stories, as this individual was engaged in the design of a learning design business venture, and I felt that this complicated the phenomenon.

The task now was to capture the liveliness of these experiences – 'pausing' what was in motion (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1390) - and preserve them for my sustained, involved, hermeneutic analysis. I listened again, carefully, and transcribed each interview as faithfully as possible, retaining all the verbal and gestural idiosyncrasies that I had noted at the time. I then sent the verbatim transcript to the participant for their verification. Once confirmed, I began the process of 'crafting' the stories.

Crafting the stories

The crafting process takes the raw script and sensitively shapes it into a hermeneutically workable text. The notion that a story can be crafted from a verbatim text "challenges the orthodoxy of the verbatim story" (Crowther et al., 2016, p. 2). Oh yes, it feels taboo to be fiddling with the transcript! But this fiddling is the beginning of close interpretive involvement. My hermeneutic understanding comes not from analysis 'on' the story, as if it is 'over there'; nor is it analysis 'of' the story in terms of its narrative meaning. No, my involvement is from *within* the story: the story is literally a passage that I enter into. Where does this passage lead? Nowhere but where I already am – except that where I am is now enriched with novel experience.

I tried to craft the stories from the transcript with a light touch, to safeguard what was whole and fresh about them "as a lived and immediate experience" (Willis, 1996, p. 220). The

story was shaped with its ambiguities intact – it was not neatened as such. Indeed, it is the multiple existing and potential meanings in the story that make it lively (Crowther et al., 2016, p. 3). I pared away only what I considered to be extraneous text: whatever seemed to be analytical ‘after the fact’ thinking, opinion; theorising, the participant’s own analysis, reflection, declared meanings, generalisations – that sort of thing. Sorting opinion from experience is not easy (Sloan & Bowe, 2014)! Interestingly, I found that some thinking out loud belonged, as it were, to the event of designing and needed to be retained because it was thinking that occurred ‘at the time’, even while it was not, perhaps, explicit at the time. (See Appendix K: *Story-crafting example – ‘The chatterboxes’*.)

The crafting was not just a sifting and a paring, but a threading and a shaping. I had expected to hear anecdotes of particular incidents bounded in time, a single ‘experience’ of being in design, as if it were a pearl. I thought that each experience would be distinguishable from every other experience and would have its own identity (van Manen, 2016a, p. 35), but this was not so. Astrid, for instance, seemed to tell me one long story. So, the task with her transcript was to gently tease out the discrete experiences from their temporal wanderings. I also expected to hear linear accounts of processes (“I did this, and then that”). Instead, these experiences looped backwards, folded in, reached forward and trailed away of their own accord. All this was quite unexpected. I wondered if, since my storytellers were ‘experienced’ practitioners, their ‘experience’ of being in design was less like an occasion and more of a maturity coming out of “life’s accumulated meaningful and reflective experiences” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 40). Perhaps this is why it was so difficult, when prompted, to speak of this or that *particular* experience of designing; it seemed easier to speak of ‘the’ experience of designing, as if it were something they were somehow ‘in’. Nevertheless, to turn the transcript into a workable text, I searched out those parts that seemed to belong together. In the end, I crafted 83 stories.

Writing as method

The phenomenological task is to “approach the actual work and ask it what and how it is” (Heidegger, 1935-36/2002b, p. 2). But how might one ask? In this methodology, writing is the method for both enquiring and understanding. There is no guide for this, but as I have discovered through careful attention to my ways of understanding, there are distinct kinds of

attention needed, and distinct kinds of writing involved. I documented many of the techniques for reference (see Appendix L: *My interpretive techniques, lodged*). In broad terms, there emerged three main genres of writing: initial interpretive writing (Giles, 2008); naming the essences; and philosophical interpretation.

Initial interpretive writing

The aim in initial interpretative writing is to experience phenomenal revelation from within the story itself. Well - I can say this now, but at the time, I did not quite know what I was doing, and to honest, I think my ignorance helped me do it, for my inner judge was a free judge - if there can be such a thing. Initial interpretive writing initiates: it begins the process of understanding. It is a first layer of 'analysis' as such in the conventional research sense, but it is an analysis of an uninhibited kind – a *loosening*, in the etymological meaning of analysis; loosening the text, loosening me up, opening me anew, and making a space for the phenomenon to *be*. I did this free writing immediately after crafting the stories, working with each participant's yield of stories as a collection before moving on to the next participant's transcript and repeating the process, thereby honing a 'method' for the work.

This initial interpretive writing phase was prolific for me, yielding 50,000 words. I wrote every day. I approached each crafted story discretely, working one at a time. Of the 83 crafted stories, I chose to work closely, interpretively, with 53. With each, my aim was to enter into the story's own sensibilities and moods (van Manen, 2007), to feel it from the inside, to become intimately one with it: to ontologically occupy the story. Why not? The etymological root of the word 'occupy' is to possess, to take hold of. And yet paradoxically, occupation was possible only by yielding myself in an act of tender submission, suspending as far as possible ambition, purpose and ego, so as to let the story assert its 'self' to me, on its own terms.

How it works: in the sanctum of the story I fall into suspension. My falling is like a kind of *falling in love*. Rilke (2009) agrees...

In order for a Thing to speak to you, you must regard it for a certain time as *the only one that exists*, as the one and only phenomenon, which through your laborious and exclusive love is now placed at the center of the universe, and which, in that incomparable place, is on that day attended by angels. (p. 236)

In this suspended state I am, as van Manen (2015, p. 3) says, not quite myself. Yet at the same time, I feel fully present in the midst of it all (Smythe et al., 2008, p. 1396). As Smythe et al. (2008) wrote - perhaps without realising the lovely enigmatic contradiction they penned - the task is “to be who we are... [and] to lose ourselves in the play” (p. 1396). Yes, it is the substantive ‘and’ that makes suspension possible. From in here I can contemplate the dimensions of the story from different vantage points, as Peter Willis says (1996, p. 220); I regard them holistically, selectively and in minute detail (van Manen, 2016a); and I regard them by both standing back, and diving in (Smythe & Spence, 2012). I grow, as Goethe says, ‘new organs of perception’ (Robbins, 2006). It seems as though I fall into the hermeneutic ‘and’ of a shared ontology, and each return extends me, as if I grow ‘more’ of myself. It is as if I grow in concert with what is phenomenally given, in phenomenal reciprocity. Deeply immersed, I am involved with and sensitive to “every impression, every germ of feeling deep within, in darkness, beyond words, in the realm of instinct unattainable by logic” (Rilke, 1929/2000 p. 25-26). I am feeling out the text with my feelers, sensitive to how I am falling, how I am claimed by a mood or taken in by a word. I am feeling out the ‘wholes’ within the text – for whatever seems to have its own centre of gravity, pulling me in – words, sentences, passages large or small. (Wholes that are like holes, perhaps!) I feel out what Richard Hycner (1985) calls a ‘unit of general meaning’, which is a whole expressing “a unique and coherent meaning... clearly differentiated from that which precedes and follows” (p. 282). Yes, what I am groping for amongst these dark passages is the *fullness* of meaning-fulness; that which I can enter into and be transformed by (Bortoft, 1971).

I was drawn into these passages, following the strange pull of meaning, as if led by the movement itself. I went where meaning took me. Sometimes, I was led *back*. I often turned to the etymological root of a single word to tease out its ‘original’ meaning, staying close, in this way, to what is ‘literal’ (Hycner, 1985, p. 282) – you may have noticed! However, unlike Hycner, I did not seek the *participant’s* meaning in the text, nor did I seek the participant’s *perception* of the experience (Willis, 1996). Instead, I was homing in on an *originary horizon*. In this mode, I let my words play with the text - to needle it, prise it open, or catch it by surprise, trusting that my words would come into their own, and letting the words trail off, and starting again from another approach, and diving in with a different mood, all the while aiming to loosen the text, to lose myself in the text. It is as if my writing manifests my feelers

in textual form. My writing is all ears, eyes, skin; I seek heat, texture, liveliness, pools of calm, sudden turns – even silences (Latham, 2001; van Manen, 2016b). I never know what I will find, what will come forth to meet me (Bortoft, 1971), or how the phenomenon will speak itself (Crotty, 1998; Smythe et al., 2008). - But I *knew* when I made contact with something true - is it arrogant to say? - I *knew* because these words that came out of my fingertips, they were nothing I could have imagined, and yet they were ‘right’ – or at least, they had about them a distant truthiness, a kind of moreness in their midst.

By dint of sheer tenacity, through the cracks of my writing the phenomenon speaks: small shocks and splinters of truth poke through and spill into being. When the phenomenon shows itself through the text - even it is just by a crack or a whisper – “it leaves one without the choice either to refuse or to voluntarily accept it” (Marion, 2003, p. 98). Yes, there is an undeniable encounter between me and ‘something’ which has its ownness. But there is more to this thing than is shown or that I can tell. It is as if the phenomenon is accompanied by its existential shadow... it lands with a bounce, you might say, teasing me, slipping away into fuzziness just when it seemed clear (van Manen, 1984, p. 44).

Contact has been made, and the phenomenon now *haunts me* (Moules et al., 2014, p. 2). It is like the phenomenon has come out of the text and now lives in me; but it is also like I am in its world. I submit to the phenomenal ‘moreness’ that it is, for “its revelation to me is more than my ability to picture or even experience it. It arrives in excess, and I am left with memory, countermemory, speech, image, melody, and still with nothing compared to its appearance” (Rocha, 2018, p. 62). Yes, the phenomenon exceeds me, and I am caught up in the larger being of it. Heidegger calls this *categorical intuition*, in which one knows, as Harman (2007) explains, “more is present in these phenomena than meets the eye. The phenomena have greater richness and depth than they seem to have at first” including all that is *a priori*, the “countless deeper layers that are also given to us, but not clearly and openly” (p. 40-41). *Yes - moreness*. My task now is to follow this spectre. I am not worried about coherence or sensibleness, for there is nothing here that makes sense. This initial interpretive writing is just opening the way for understanding – it does not have to be itself understandable! Later, I will turn to philosophic texts for this. For now, I turn to that other language of the unsayable, poetry (Bachelard, 1958/2014; Heidegger, 1927/2010).

Poetic writing, or 'poetising' (Willis, 1996), finds its own way to meaning. In poetry, words are "charged with their utmost meaning" (Dunlop, 2007, p. 1257), and this charge releases 'more' of the phenomenon's pent up potency; it is the means by which "waves of newness flow over the surface of being" (Bachelard, 1958/2014, p. 237). Poetry releases us from the 'thralldom' of conventional modes of thinking and writing (Crotty, 1996, p. 281). Here, what is given becomes ontologically in-scribed, if you like, in a form that is proper to itself. In initial interpretive writing the poetic texture of the language allows the phenomenon to rise up freely - exaggerated, perhaps; certainly amplified. Such treatment honors the phenomenological imagination and *allows the impression to continue in its surging up* (Bachelard, 1958/2014). Yes, by this surging, I am now free to follow. I write:

*What is given gathers in like water pooling at the deepest point
Unutterable / at first it speaks of something... wordless
I can only burble / shy in the language of its meaning
- but when I let myself go I find I am / skyward
these words a fountain of love rising in force-ful agreement.*

But the potency of poetry does not exhaust its profit in this initial interpretive writing phase. When used in polished text, poetising invokes an immediacy and vividness for the reader (Willis, 1996). It also holds open understandings (Giles, 2008). One could say that poetry lends a kind of generative interpretivity to the reader: it gives a sense of, points to, conveys, or at least opens our inner senses to our hidden realms.

Naming the essences: the ironic reduction

Fragments of insight can now be corralled into coherent form. Now, the task is to gather the phenomenal threads which have until this point been held in abeyance until the initial interpretive writing was done. Firstly, everything is reread to look for themes (Giles, 2008). But these are not themes in the conventional research sense - in fact it seems they are quite the opposite. The crux of the difference is this: in qualitative methods such as grounded research, themes are constructed categories which encode, contain and close down into theory what is meaningful in the data; in hermeneutic phenomenology, the themes are intended as points of access that faithfully witness (Starks & Trinidad, 2007), open up and speak to the possible in the human experience (van Manen & Adams, 2010). That is, themes

in hermeneutic phenomenology open, rather than close. So yes, my initial interpretive writing threw up patterns (Thompson et al., 1989; van Manen & Adams, 2010), but not patterns of repetitive content; rather, it threw up patterns of intimation, of something more. As Smythe et al. (2008) explain,

What we call 'themes' are not necessarily 'the same thing' said again and again, but rather an understanding we have seen something that matters significantly, something that we wish to point the reader towards. (p. 1392)

Because of the existing associative meaning, I chose not to use the nomenclature of 'themes' and instead used the term 'essences' to describe what it was I was drawing toward - though even this term seemed to fall short of the richness I was beginning to glimpse in these patterns of pointing-to. I simply could not land on a befittingly descriptive word.

I also perceived an awkward relationship between the term 'essences' and what is called 'the reduction' in phenomenology, which further confounded the issue. The phenomenological reduction an abstemious methodological move which describes the identification of what must be *denied* in order to reveal the phenomenon. The various forms of phenomenological reduction are helpfully typologised by van Manen (2016a) – though he himself points out that they not necessarily exclusive. van Manen begins with the commonly understood *eidetic reduction* in the style of Husserl, which attempts to cancel out whatever is not belonging to that phenomenon in order to reveal the ownness, the irreducible specificity or 'whatness' of the phenomenon – what is distinctive, enigmatic, particular, and singular about it as it appears into consciousness; or, as Karin Dahlberg (2006) eloquently puts it, that which "makes the phenomenon to be that very phenomenon" (p. 11). van Manen (2016a) contrasts this kind with Heidegger's *ontological reduction*, which is concerned with modes of (human) being; Marion's *radical reduction*, concerned with the givenness itself; the *ethical reduction* in the style of Levinas, concerned with what addresses us; and the *originary reduction*, concerned with the source of phenomena (pp. 226-239). The reduction is not typically employed in hermeneutic phenomenology, as the hermeneutic element acknowledges the deeply interpretive involvement of the researcher 'in' the enquiry (what, then, can be refused?). In this form of phenomenology, the reductive move is replaced by a declarative move. The 'reduction', then, in hermeneutic phenomenology, is not an excision

performed at the beginning of the enquiry, but an expression of original hiddenness, a return, a reversal, or a pivoting - not prior to but *part of the revelatory process*.

Along the way, then, I have noted another kind of reduction, which is to do with the phenomenon's conveyance of 'something more'. As van Manen (2016a, p. 355) reminds, the phenomenon both gives meaningfulness and at the same time resists the fullness of our understanding. Perhaps we cannot know the 'fullness' of the phenomenon precisely because it is the boundlessness of the phenomenon that distinguishes it as a particular phenomenon, and as phenomenal. To put it simply, a phenomenon is *that which shows that there is more than can be shown*. Reduced thus - non-reductively, as it were - the phenomenon *refuses to be reduced* to its mode, way of being, distinctiveness, givenness, address, source: it exceeds the idea of the reduction! Is what I am describing an *ironic reduction*, perhaps? Yes, it seems to me that the phenomenon conveys itself through a sense that it is still arriving. Yes, the phenomenon of my profound and prolonged attention throws itself before itself like the fingers of a shadow. Its essences are like vapours only, "intimations of meaningfulness [in their] full ambiguity, irreducibility, contingency, mystery and ultimate indeterminacy" (van Manen & Adams, 2010, p. 453). The ironic reduction seems to show the essence of the phenomenon to be its very 'moreness' which is not, and may never be, fully present to the senses; the non-discoverable, irreducible self of itself.

However they are reified, these essential phenomenal qualities have their own characteristics "without which it would not be that phenomenon" (Dahlberg, 2006, p. 11). Belonging only and uniquely to the phenomenon in question, these quirky essences cannot be recognised as anything we already know (van Manen, 2007, p. 453). The essences have no name – and this makes them hard to 'say'. And yet they *must* be said, for the task of naming the actual essences might be the very nub of the phenomenological task. Oh, but it was hard to do, this naming! At times I stared too hard and lost sight of what I looked at (Polanyi, 1966/2009, p. 18). At other times, and often, the desire to confer names got me lost in the ensnarements of posturing, figuring, constructing, declaring, ordering, arranging, justifying and neatening. Heidegger (1927/2010) warned of this, this "most exaggerated 'self-dissection' which tries out all kinds of possibilities of interpretation, with the result that the 'characterologies' and 'typologies' which it points out are themselves too numerous to grasp" (p. 171). Yes indeed. In the end, all that is left to do is to withdraw from grasping, and

announce the essences of the phenomenon with their properly enigmatic titles; to give them their due as hidden. (For a record of my angst in naming the essences, see my journaling in Appendix M: *Excerpts from 'Clearing the way' reflective journal.*)

Reading and rendering meaning: philosophical interpretation

The essences are now the 'working material' (van Manen, 2007, p. 453) of the project. This next wave of writing takes form as polished and pathic evocative prose (van Manen, 2016a, p. 25), written so as to render the phenomenon in question communicable, whilst retaining its ineffableness, and to convey from its text-ured shadows a sense of its phenomenal depth. The switch is from an immersive to a philosophic interpretation. For this, reading philosophic, phenomenological and literary texts are the order of the day, for they serve as 'insight cultivators' (van Manen, 2016a, p. 324), and take me beyond my known ways of knowing, to open thought anew. Since the phenomenological study investigates human ways of being, it is existential philosophy that provides the most direct interpretive route – rather than, say, philosophy 'of' something - design philosophy, for instance – which is secondary, being itself grounded in primary sources of philosophical thought. Chiefly, I read Heidegger and Jaspers, moving between the two, learning from each of them. I found myself awed by Heidegger for his ontological exposition of being, but felt personally removed, whereas I was *moved* by Jaspers, because without his transcending perspective, the fathomless phenomenal weightiness of existential meaningfulness was opaque to me.

Since experience is primary in the phenomenological project, the stories lead the philosophic interpretation in the text. I am aiming with this writing to present the findings as a 'living text' rooted in 'lively stories' (Willis, 2004, p. 8), so snatches of participants' stories anchor the phenomenon in concrete, lived experience. The presence of the participants' voices in the text not only gives life to the text, but also strengthens the quality of the interpretative research by providing 'evidence', explanation, and illustration (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006, p. 11). Fidelity to these stories is a way to empirically demonstrate the basis for the interpretation (Thompson et al., 1989). But the stories, while evocative, cannot speak for themselves, for the ineffable phenomenon is not here 'in' these transcribed words. As Gadamer (1975/2004, p. 378) says, the task is to get 'behind' the text to the horizon of the question within it – closing in, circling around that for which there are no words.

Expressing the inexpressible is the task of philosophy, the language of the unsayable (Bachelard, 1958/2014; Heidegger, 1927/2010). Philosophers are expert communicators of what cannot be said! Or at least, they are experts at asking questions and opening thought, pursuing, as Jaspers (1957a) holds, not final understandings, but communication, that “consciously approached realm in which we all can meet each other” (p. 87). In the philosophic context, the task is not, perhaps, to claim truth but to be, as Benjamin Crowe (2006) says, ready to abandon anything that does not ‘ring true’ (p. 28). Accordingly, I write with a slow hand, allowing whatever presents to “become clear by itself” (Jaspers, 1961, p. 8) as if arising of its accord from within the hidden regions of the text. Only then can I pass through its perspective (Jaspers, 1961, p. 8) - as if it were a door held open from the inside. With every new findings chapter I enter that unchartable territory again, and the process restarts almost from scratch. Almost – because each essence lingers, like a vapour I am breathing, while I write about the next. With each findings chapter I trust myself more, and I find an honest rhythm to my readings and researching. I can feel myself having an open conversation with the unsayable. Yes, after a while, I realised I was not only reading philosophers, I was answering them, and then striking out on my own: now *I* was philosophising! The discipline now is knowing where and how to *stop* reading, writing, and circling, because

eventually, there is no end in searching for the phenomena of a phenomenon, not even a final thought of it, just like there is no end in searching for the feeling of a feeling, or the meaning of a meaning. (Wu, 2003, p. 133)

I long to go deeper still. I am drawn to the realm of the mysterious... what cannot be known... to founder there and be struck silent. I long to be enfolded by the intimacy that intimacy keeps with itself / the intimacy that collapses all worlds into itself, taking me with it. The unsayable sacred... the stillness that animates.

I know that what I am really pursuing with my all of my enquiring is the nature of ‘the depth itself’ (Jaspers, 1957b, p. 846) – or that deepest part of experience that resists all transformation, “a brick wall of spiritual *fatum*” (Nietzsche, 1886/2002, p. 123). But I can only go so far! As I write the findings, the shadow of their ‘practice’ accompanies me, and then I wonder, as I go about my work, how any of this philosophical, ontological, existential insight will ever come to pass into something I can give back to my professional field.

Gazes and voices

Before leaving the way of the methodology, I want to register two powerful attentions that I cultivated throughout the enquiry: an awareness of who I am writing 'for' (gazes); and an awareness of who I am writing 'as' (voices). Like two antennae they are the personal feedback loops that accompanied my writing.

Firstly to gazes, the ghostly readers of my writing. The first gaze that I became aware of was that of the Course Director for the *Doctor of Education*. I noticed my chapter writing emerge from the thoughts I first pursued in my coursework, and his 'essay marking' gaze continued to exert an influence, even while I transitioned, with some difficulty, from essay writing to the mode of research writing. The laser of his gaze, however, was not on the quality of my writing, but on its purpose, reminding me that although philosophical in nature, my enquiry was a professional enquiry rooted in the educational context. Next were the gazes of my two supervisors. Their gazes seemed to be always silently smiling and nodding at me, and supplied a sense of continuity, of the journey, of progress. Even when one of my supervisors retired, moved overseas, and became, as it were, a quieter partner in the triangle, his opinion did not lose any strength or presence for me; I continued to channel his guidance, as it were. My father occupied another gaze, for I knew that he would read it as I would want it to be read, for *sincerity* – his gaze kept me honest, and working hard. The gaze of the storytellers stayed with me throughout; I wondered, will they recognise their experience in my interpretation – or might it be that my words open beyond their immediate experience? The gaze of my examiners comes into view last of all, only near the end, resulting in a flurry of re-writing as I tried to meet their invisible and exacting standards. Yes, it was as if a great crowd were peering in on me as I worked.

'Voice' was the complement to gaze, but where gaze's multiples were concurrent, voice's multiples took turns, as if in conversation. Every mode of voice was valid, and every mode had a perspective; the methodologic discipline was in discerning the best voice for the writing in hand, as this email to my supervisors reveals:

You pick up on a critical difficulty for me, which is positioning the research voice. My voice. I can write about someone else's experience as if it were not my own – maybe one of my storytellers. But I have already said in the methodology that in the interpretive mode, I have

taken these stories into myself, and I am living them. So I am always slipping from that person to me. Besides, contentiously, since 'the' self that experiences is always 'this' self – myself – it makes sense to write in the first person, which is, by my understanding, the ontic ontological that Heidegger insists upon. The 'I' helps avoid the generalisations and assumptions of the 'we'. But as you point out, if the experience is a shared human experience, which is after all the very axis of the enquiry, it *is* possibly (also) a 'we'. Hmmm. At other times I avoid the problem altogether and slip into the indefinite realm of 'one', as in 'one might'. Or, I can appeal to the reader directly, for this is the landing-place for any understanding. All of these positions are reasonable, and somehow, mutual. But how? (Personal communication, January 30, 2020)

Oh, I switched mercilessly between pronouns, as I tried to (all at the same time) say what I mean, address you, appeal to 'us' collectively, beg the question rhetorically and position the work within the common of being human. One – you, in fact! - could say I lacked discipline, and I ought to have given it to an editor for 'fixing', but in the end, I became attached to the eccentricity of my writing, for the jostling of the pronouns came to somehow capture, for me, the substantive 'and', and the idiosyncratic 'and' universal dialogue of the existential enquiry – it was, in any case, about as authentic as I could get.

Now I can see a tree.

The tree - *that* tree, see there -
adjusts itself, it is
starlight falling quietly,
a trace of drunken bees,
the ghost of every seed,
the innermost dream of an itchy bird,
an algebra of currents swift and slow.

And it is earth conspiring with air,
water conspiring with fire,
it is raw.

The tree, materialising the sky, is restless for nothing.
It is just holding open the whole of itself unto itself.

Five: Listening for design's own address

The real cycle you're working on is a cycle called yourself. The machine that appears to be 'out there' and the person that appears to be 'in here' are not two separate things. They grow toward Quality or fall away from Quality together.

- Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

Since learning design does not have a philosophic ground of its own from which to ask about itself, I search for it within the design philosophy literature. My search is for learning design's deeper dimension, that which is spoken in a register of human being, both ontological and existential. Here, in this hidden intellectual wonderland of design thought (Dilnot, 2006), I could listen for learning design's address spoken afresh, free from the higher education narratives and orthodoxies that ordinarily attend and shape it.

In this chapter, I trace a *design* line of enquiry from our starting-point of higher education teaching, through learning design as a form of design, into design itself, passing through its phenomenal layers towards its hidden beating heart. In keeping with the methodology, I read the literature hermeneutically (Smythe & Spence, 2012), asking questions; letting myself be addressed by questions; following the lead of what drew me, elicited my resistance, and presented as meaningful.

Reading for design in our context

While there is a strong and growing body of literature concerned with learning design in higher education, this literature remains "surprisingly quiet about design itself" (Goodyear, 2015, p. 41). Nevertheless, since the time of Goodyear's observation, design concepts have become increasingly mainstream in the university, by being either explicitly co-opted by university administrators into organisational business procedures, authentically present in the curriculum of the disciplines being taught, or plied into educational use as active learning strategies. Ready examples include 'design thinking', a technique intended as a management 'resource' (see Kimbell, 2009, 2011, 2012); 'co-designing' educational services and

curriculum, a methodology rooted in the social sciences (seminally, Sanders, 2002; Sanders & Stappers, 2008); and ‘user experience design’, born in human-computer interaction (HCI) design, and coined for everyday use by Donald Norman (1988). All these expressions of design, in both trope and genuine form, influence our conversations about teaching - but they do not bring us any closer to a real understanding of ‘design itself’. For this, I explore two bodies of literature in the university teaching context that are concerned with design: teaching as design; and learning design as a form of design.

Teaching as design

It is reasonable to say that teachers are engaging in ‘design’ whenever they make decisions about how teaching will be -

many teachers will consciously and reflectively engage in the process of design in this general sense of everyday lesson planning, while other teachers may never have given it much thought, but nonetheless make subconscious design decisions every time they prepare a teaching session. (Britain, 2007, p. 104)

And, while academic teachers might not call what they are doing ‘designing’ *per se*, there is a scholarly curiosity about how academic teaching might be conceived as a kind of design (Bennett et al., 2017; Goodyear, 2015; Laurillard, 2013b; Mor & Craft, 2012). Bennett and her colleagues (Bennett et al., 2017) claim that what teachers naturally do is already a kind of designing, since it seems, on the surface, to share the characteristics of professional designing - working within constraints, reflection, iteration, and so forth (pp. 141-142). Here, design’s figure in teaching is strictly utilitarian: design, they say, gives us tools and strategies that support higher education teachers to author, document and share their work. Diana Laurillard (2013b), one the main proponents of conceiving one’s teaching as design, calls for a ‘design science’ in which teachers might act like design researchers. For Laurillard, design’s utility is to drive new knowledge about teaching. In terms of its design research type, according to Susan McKenney et. al (2015), Laurillard’s utilitarian approach to teaching as design would likely be classified as technical (investigating models, processes, criteria and tools as so forth) or realist (focusing on matters of expertise and practical concerns). McKenney et. al contrast these types with a third kind which they call phenomenological; that is, studies investigating tacit knowledge, intuitive practice and situated experience (- noting that McKenney et. al’s use of the term phenomenological describes the focus of the research, rather than the

methodology, and does nothing to suggest the ontological, the existential or the philosophic in phenomenological enquiry.) The phenomenological perspective situates designing as an 'expertise' "underpinned by tacit knowledge and skills" (p. 192). This kind of design knowledge, they write, is acquired within the routine work "that forms a natural part of authentic teaching practice" (p. 192). Yet still there is a utilitarian undertone to this positioning of designing, insofar as the authors call this awareness a 'capacity' in which the teacher is aware that their experiences are "rich resources for improvisation and connoisseurship" (p. 192) in teaching practice. Peter Goodyear, in *Teaching as Design* (2015) is more measured, calling teachers' practices "design-like" (p. 31). Teaching practices, says Goodyear, might look like design, but they lack the professional designer's discipline to curtail impulse with circumspection and to see one's work as occurring within broader frames of reference. Goodyear points out that without this disciplined practice awareness in place, teachers tend to make assumptions and 'rush to implement' a solution (p. 31). – A reality no doubt exacerbated by the "frenzied rituals of organisational behaviour" (Marshall, 2018, p. 11), which leave no-one a moment to think for themselves.

Learning design as a form of design

I was also interested in whether, or how, learning design might be recognised as a form of design. But the terrain of this question is unstraightforward, for the term 'learning design' is used interchangeably with 'educational design' and 'instructional design', and the understanding and use of these terms not only varies from country to country, but within institutions. Out of concern for diverging unnecessarily from the task of asking about design itself, I cut to my own rudimentary descriptions of learning design's neighbours: that educational design is concerned with researching educational methods that advance the efficacy of the discipline of education; and instructional design is concerned with the way a particular educational strategy is constructed, irrespective of disciplinary context. Of the three in this family, it is instructional design that most readily claims legitimacy as a kind of design (Rowland, 1993, p. 79). Indeed, instructional design is well suited to making such a claim, as it is ontic in the extreme. Instructional design is lodged in the cognitive and behavioural science paradigm made popular by psychologist Burrhus Skinner in the middle of last Century (1965), and is chiefly concerned with matters of practical problem-solving, efficiency, quality and accountability (see Bird et al., 2007; Rowland, 1993; Seeto & Herrington, 2006; Smith &

Ragan, 2004). In practice, instructional design is highly structured, systematic and procedural (Hoogveld et al., 2002; Moallem, 1998); a rules-based science that has built a 'field' for itself - see (Beirne & Romanoski, 2018; Kent L. Gustafson & Robert Maribe Branch, 2002; Kent L. Gustafson & Robert M. Branch, 2002; Jonassen, 1999; Rowland, 1993; Smith & Ragan, 2004). While use of the terminology instructional design appears to have fallen out of favour in the university, in Australia at least, its paradigm nonetheless continues to strongly influence both learning design and educational design.

I leave the question of whether learning design is a kind of design unresolved, and offer instead an observation that learning design seems to differ from educational and instructional design in one very important respect: unlike its cousins, learning design is *still asking about what it is* – indeed, it is still *learning* about itself! In an age where there is no agreement about what is learning (Barnett, 2011, p. 7) it is fitting that learning design should also let itself be open at the edges. I wondered – might our designing take its cue from learning itself? As researchers Sloane and Bowe (2014) observed of the experience of the academics they inducted into an explicit design process for their teaching practice, the academics *learned much*: they learned about “the evolution of curricula, the bureaucracy of the institute, about how colleagues design modules and about him or herself as a designer” – and, significantly, they were “changed by the experience personally” (p. 1300). I wondered - perhaps it is enough for academic teachers to have knowledge of learning design simply through bringing attention to their existing involvements – to ask and to learn about learning design *from within the work of it*?

There is something here about design in the context of learning that is to do with the particular quality of one's awareness. Christopher Alexander' (1964) notion of 'self-conscious' and 'unselfconscious' designing might offer a clue. In our context, university teachers' non-professionalised, intuited, tacit mode of learning design work can be seen as unselfconscious. Here is a “design without designers” (Louridas, 1999, p. 8), whose mode, as with the owner-builder, is *directness*: the designer is not separate from the design. In contrast, self-conscious design is design that recognises itself 'as design' (Kimbell, 2009), and in this mode, one's designing is for another, not for oneself (de Lange, 2015; Kimbell, 2009; Salustri & Eng, 2007; Spaid, 2018) – a client, for instance. In learning design, however, these modes are not so clear-cut. Here, the teacher designs for the *event* of learning, which typically involves

themselves and their students. Seen this way, learning design pays attention to the situation itself (Gero & Kannengiesser, 2006; Saad-Sulonen, 2018), and is both self-conscious and unselfconscious together. A situated view of designing works is one that works directly with ‘first-person’ rather than ‘encoded’ knowledge (Gero & Kannengiesser, 2006, p. 6). This view seems to make sense of the research which tells that when university teachers talk about their learning design processes, they do not report using formal models of designing (Bennett et al., 2017, p. 140). Indeed, it seems that even professional learning designers work from their own personal approaches (Kanuka et al., 2013; Kenny et al., 2005).

While the presence of ‘design’ in teaching and learning design may be discovered or learned in a personal, situated way from within the work itself, the question of what it ‘is’ seems to falter and fade at the boundary-line of its context. For a more original insight into design itself, we must cross into the realm of design philosophy literature and look back on our higher education context from this vantage point. In this body of work, we can listen for what designers say they have learned from design itself, whilst staying attentive to resonances with learning design. Here, designers philosophise and theorise from their experience about what it is like to be in design, delving wider and deeper, beyond design’s utility, speaking out boldly *from within design’s own place* – like this:

what we normally call intuition is unavoidably the motor of the design process. It is not a question of whether we should prefer an intuitive approach to design or a reasoning approach. It is simply [necessary] for design to take place at all. (Hillier, 2007, p. 317)

I wish that scholars of learning design could be so bold! What else can we learn? Importantly, what other questions can we ask about design that we have so far failed to ask in our context?

Already involved in design

But are we not already in the place of design? Humans cannot help but be involved in design (Tatum, 2004, p. 66). Design, in our world, is so ubiquitous that it is reasonable to say, as Schön (1987) does, that we live in design. Yes, it is through human choices, our works of design, that we have arrived at our present perilous threshold - and it may be that it is only ‘by design’ that we can cross it, and continue to exist at all (Fry, 2008; Rodgers & Bremner,

2018). So: we are involved 'in' design ontologically - and existentially, too, if we are to survive our designing and live to design another day.

For all the import of the design moment we find ourselves in, still it remains that being 'in' design is like being in a giant blind spot. It is hard to see where we stand when we are so deeply enmeshed. The designed world is, in reality, not one world at all, but a 'supercomplexity', or complexity of complexities (Barnett, 2000b). Not only is the designed world deeply inter-entangled, it is also a world largely undisclosed (Bell, 2017). The designed world that we see is just the surface layer; below are the thickets of invisible interconnected data, the territories of commercial interests and the wild algae blooms of algorithms that, largely unregulated (Dawson et al., 2019), stealthily condition the activities of our work, our learning, and our leisure. Indeed, as design becomes increasingly immaterial in our world (Buchanan, 2001a; Gardien et al., 2014; Morelli, 2003; Rittel, 1972; van der Beek, 2012), moving from 'product' to 'service', and more recently, to 'experience' - moving, as it were, from the exterior to the interior (Buchanan, 2008) - it is increasingly hard to see. Now, invisibly, it is our behaviours that are being designed (Singleton, 2014).

Design now hides in plain sight *within* our worldly involvements. The focus on the personal experience in design brings the individual into a more direct, immediate involvement with design. This philosophy is the basis of 'user experience' (UX) design (see Buchanan, 2001a; Gardien et al., 2014; Morelli, 2003; Rittel, 1972; van der Beek, 2012), a conceptual design approach which penetrates well beyond its roots in interaction design, into the concerns of every kind of business - including the business of higher education, where it has found a foothold as "the student experience". UX purports to be concerned with the quality of the consumer, customer or client's experience, yet its chief concern is ultimately with the product (Sanders, 2002). In our university context, the two are arguably one and the same, for the quality of the student experience *is* the selling point of the competitive university. No wonder the notion of the 'user experience' has taken root so well! 'Meta-design' (see chiefly Fischer, 2007; Fischer & Giaccardi, 2006) is another design concept that has found its way into the higher education landscape. Meta-design describes design that is designed for others' designing, deliberately cascading (some of) the design involvement itself into the hands of the 'user'. Also originally from interaction design, the meta-design paradigm is now found in almost every consumer-facing experience, because it promises not only experience, but

authorship, transforming the 'user' into a 'producer'. Design-your-own kitchens, co-designed services, video game modifications shared by the gaming community are based on this approach, and in higher education, the meta-design philosophy underpins approaches such as students as partners in their learning (for this see Bell, 2016; Bovill, 2020). Practiced conscientiously, design approaches like this can situate a more democratic design, moving it closer to a responsible civic process (Manzini, 2015).

Increasingly, we expect to have a customised experience. There is much in the designed world, increasingly much, that is passed off as personal and yet is entirely insincere; for it remains that the powers that appear to be conferred on the individual are themselves designed. We find ourselves in a position where we are inundated with what I call the 'false personal', a deliberate deception which claims us by staging fake sensations (Rodgers & Bremner, 2018) - such as belonging or authorship. Through the commodification of idea of the personal we are granted a *seeming* involvement in design, designing what we consume: we become so-called consumer-producers or 'prosumers' (Rodgers & Bremner, 2018, p. 555). Prosumers make their design choices within the influential constraints of a 'choice architecture' (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) which prefigures a limited array of choices. In the educational context, the learning management system is a prime example, whereby our learning design choices occur within a fixed set of technical constraints configured by the product itself, and then further delimited at enterprise level within each hosting institution.

Within this highly designed world, our apparent design choices can be seen as merely data points in the next, more hidden order of design. Is the design we are already in so ubiquitous, so ethereal and perhaps so (falsely) personal that we fail to register it in our experience at all? Could we have reached a point of design singularity where what is designed is indeed the design of 'nothing' - nothing but empty logistics and branding (Rodgers & Bremner, 2018)? A design that disappears in us, becomes us – that even *deliberately steps into our blind spot!* How will we know? Might we be already in the invisible grip of a design that consumes whatever does not belong to it: nature, sacred practices, art, learning, politics, health, even human relations?

If we want to look design in the eye and meet it on its own ground, we should first look to ourselves to see how we are already involved: its ground and our ground are the same. When we see ourselves in design we are looking into the mirrors of our own making.

What we see there is *ourselves* hiding and guiding and wroughting the world; *ourselves* being malicious and greedy and careless. Sure, like Heidegger (1927/2010) says, we are thrown into a world not of our choosing. But do we not also throw ourselves into the world? Are we not ourselves the world we are thrown into? And do we not also ourselves throw worlds out, spinning them from our very being, like a surplus? Yes, we are destructive and generative beings, renting and weaving the fabric of our own entangled existences, through our involvements in design.

Phenomena of design as such

I asked now: if design is so hidden and so tangled in being, how might we know it? Is there a phenomenon of 'design' as such that we can be alert to? Voices in the design community seemed unsure; design was too big, too complex and indistinct to be a singular phenomenon, though it may be a confluence of other phenomena, or found somehow in the boundaries between phenomena (Salustri & Eng, 2007). Nevertheless, while it may be difficult to articulate what design 'is', exactly (Dilnot, 1982), in my hermeneutic reading of design, some characteristics appeared – and one of them seemed to be its very elusiveness. Designers expounding their craft say design is dynamic, fluid, emergent and complex, and as such *by its very nature* resists stabilisation (Sevaldson, 2010); that it “eludes reduction” and is always expanding its meanings, “revealing unexpected dimensions in practice as well as understanding” (Buchanan, 1992, p. 5). Reading closely and widely, I discovered a design research community that at ease that its research “leaves open the interpretation of the nature of design” (Cross, 2001b, p. 4), and indeed ‘cherishes’ design’s richness and multiplicities (Dorst, 2011, p. 521). Here, designers deliberately and constantly challenge and unsettle their field (Buchanan, 2001a). I thought – design addresses itself, perhaps?

In all of this I noted something essential about design: the interplay of opening and closing. It seemed to me that, while design work is creative within its given bounds (its materials, conditions, aims and such), ‘what’ is designed always comes out of and exceeds its bounds. The constraints themselves, that which enclose the design ‘space’; that is, the field of our attentions and attunements (Akama, 2012), actually work to open the design (Wendt, 2018). The designer moves between these constraints and freedoms (Stiny, 2006, p. 337) and, by seeing through conventions, plays with what is already there to create new forms

(Frantzen, 2007, p. 431) – forms that, once opened, must then be contained. In the to-and-fro between open and closed, the designer inhabits the ‘in-between’ space (Leret & Raijmakers, 2013) and at the same time, presses to go beyond - to trouble what is open and what is closed, to move the bounds, to redefine the problem, to change the goals (Cross, 2001a), and yes, to see differently (Dorst, 2015).

The experience of design

Alongside asking about the phenomena of design, we can approach the question of what design is through our experience of design. Yes, it is the same question, but asked via a different line of reading enquiry. Asked this way, I return to and begin to tease out the personal, and perhaps common, experience of designing.

A practicing designer may or may not be a scholarly philosopher of design, but they are involved in a kind of disclosive back-and-forth dialoguing with the world (Narváez & Fehér, 2000). This idea was made popular by Donald Schön’s highly influential body of work. Schön (1983, 1992) foregrounds the way that designer and the situation are engaged in a kind of ‘reflective conversation’; a conversation in which the designer appreciates the situation with their senses, and determines ‘what is there’. What Schön describes sounds very much like a hermeneutic mode of being ‘in’ an unfolding, involved understanding. Architect Adrian Snodgrass (2001), however, is unequivocal about the hermeneutic nature of design, describing how the designer moves between the whole and the parts, ‘wandering’, as he says, and giving themselves over to the process, whereby “things appear to us, show themselves forth, by chance” (p. 5). Seen this way, design speaks not as something a designer is working ‘on’, *per se*, but as an experience which the designer is ‘in’:

The process of design is thus a disclosure, in two senses. Firstly, it is a disclosing of the artefact that is being designed; and secondly, and simultaneously, it is an unfolding of self-understanding, since it reveals one’s preunderstandings. It uncovers the preconceptions that are constitutive of the design outcome, and at the same time brings to light the prejudices that are constitutive of what we are. The design process is an edification in two senses: it builds up the artefact and edifies the designer. (Snodgrass & Coyne, 1996, p. 25)

I then asked - if design is a way of making sense of things (Kolko, 2010; Krippendorff, 1989; Manzini, 2015), is that sense personal, or is it shared between individuals? Is there a

commonly shared experience of designing, across its forms and fields? The 'Across Design' research consortium (Blackwell et al., 2009; Eckert et al., 2010; Eckert et al., 2012) tackled this question, looking for patterns of experience amongst 24 designers from different design fields. Findings from the project revealed as significant the centrality of the personal relationship that designers have with their designing. I thought - this is interesting: the common experience of design may be that *the experience of design is intimately our own*.

At first when I was reading, I expected to see my own experience of design written there (Dorst & Dijkhuis, 1995). But design research does not often say what the experience of designing is really like, preferring for the most part to focus on the processes that inform professional design practice (Blackwell et al., 2009; Dilnot, 2006; Dorst, 2008; Sevaldson, 2010). The actual, lived experience of designing tends to get lost in translation (Jahnke, 2012), reported as techniques, skills, cognitive moves, perhaps orientations, epistemologies, identities, while the deeply human elements of designing become abstracted and generalised away from reality (Akama, 2009). Is this an attempt to order the place of experience within a 'designed' design process? After all, designers are writing this, and they love to design.

I suspect that the difficulty in finding relatable designing experiences in the literature is partly methodological – which strongly underlines a place for phenomenological research approaches. It is difficult to adequately capture human experience through the reflective interviews and protocol analysis methods commonly used in design research (Davies & Talbot, 1987). These kinds of methods tell us 'about' the experience, but they do not bring us closer to grasping of the nature of the phenomenon (Dilnot, 1998). Nevertheless, while the methods might not themselves explicitly disclose the phenomenal experience of being in design, as long as experience was vaguely present in the text, I found that if I attuned differently and hermeneutically read through the texts, as it were, to the phenomenon of being in design, I could read a case study or narrative analysis of a design process and vicariously access a sense of what it is like.

What kinds of experiences are present in the literature? Some seem like ordinary human experiences, understood in the context of design. For instance, there is a large body of work in design literature that examines the way that idea generation, imaginative work and creativity feature in design work (for instance Akin, 1990; Crilly, 2015; Folkmann, 2010; Rowland & Wilson, 1994). A smaller pocket of literature picks up the thread that experiences

in designing not only serve the design process, but can show us how human beings 'are' - for instance, the experience of being in uncertainty as fundamental to designing (Akama et al., 2018; Tracey & Hutchinson, 2016).

Other studies seemed to show the enigma of design experiences as such. One study of 35 professional designers' experiences stood out for me as particularly powerful. In this study researchers Davies and Talbot (1987) investigated the experience of seeing the final form of the design, which they called the 'imago', in which the experience is actually 'a state of being' *inseparable from the design's form* - the designer is "being the knowing" (p. 24). They also reported experiencing a sense of oneness; experiencing something universal and ultimate; of ecstasy; of the sacred; of something original and yet familiar; and of something seen, and yet unsayable. This paper was a watershed for me: *now* I could see my design experience reflected back to me, in this immense and intimate involvement! The intensely personal aspect of designing was also noted by a phenomenographic study into the experiences of being a design student across diverse disciplines of design (Solomonides & Reid, 2009). The authors found that students' 'sense of being' was central to their involvements and was linked to experiences of personal transformation. Personal commitment was highlighted too, with one student likening their design learning engagement to a marriage engagement - a weddedness between self and design. Similarly, Tiiu Vaikla-Poldma's (2003) doctoral thesis explored the experiences of interior design students in the design learning environment. Interestingly, in her study, the form of design practice - design interiors - provided not just the discipline context for designing but the means for understanding it too, whereby the students came to understand design interiors by paying attention to their own 'interiors', allowing the design to explain itself - if I can say - 'interiorally'.

Another point of access into the experience of designing is to ask about what it is like to be a designer. What do designers say about this? They say that a designer is one who intentionally designs, who consciously attends to their practice (Salustri & Eng, 2007). They say that a designer is one who can represent the form of that which is intangible (Herriott, 2017); who is themselves shaped by their designing (Wendt, 2018); who is aware of both the design particular in question, and the design process they are undertaking (Stolterman, 2008); who is thoughtful about design *as such* (Löwgren & Stolterman, 2004); who responsibly accepts the call to design (d'Anjou, 2011); and who is aware of the consequential

involvements of their designs in the designed world (Nelson & Stolterman, 2012). The designer is also one who knows when a situation is *not* about design (Mitcham, 2001). These are all resonances of a self-aware designer involved with not just with designing, but with their experiences of designing. Indeed, I noticed a strange pattern in the literature: that as designers mature with experience, they become increasingly free of the conventions, methods and models of designing – to the point where design itself can be a kind of freedom (Daly et al., 2012). It is as if the designer passes through the formalities of design into a new kind of openness – an inner openness, perhaps?

And I wondered - are these experiences uniquely design experiences, only describable by designers? And further, are they nomothetic kinds of experiences rooted in all human beings, or are they the idiographic experiences of individual, belong only to the authors themselves? Does the thread I am tugging reach back towards some original primordial fundament, or is it a thread that leads into greater and greater particularity? Or is it both: does an understanding of what is design open and close to itself in a universal kind of idiosyncratic infinity – is it a mobius strip of experience I am following?

Design's existential address

Now my reading of design opened to the question of design posed in the ontological and existential register (see d'Anjou, 2007, 2010; Diethelm, 2014; Dilnot, 2006; Fry, 2005, 2014; Fry et al., 2015; Oosterling, 2009; van der Merwe, 2008; Willis, 2006; Winograd & Flores, 1990). If design is, as some design scholars say, part of the very matrix of life (Papanek, 1972), and if its origin “is lodged in our origin” (Fry, 2014, p. 15), then existentially and ontologically, as Fry contends (2005), we are not just *in* design, we *are* design. Design is simply part of what it is to be human (Lawson & Dorst, 2009; Logan & van Alstyne, 2007; Manzini, 2015; Nelson & Stolterman, 2012; Papanek, 1972; Salustri & Eng, 2007), somehow coming out of and depending on a designer's own being (Nelson & Stolterman, 2012, p. 257).

I learned that to be in design is always a risk. Each design situation is unique, and there are no guarantees that a design will ‘work’. Instead, in design there is a surrender into intentional and conscious not-knowing (Nelson & Stolterman, 2012) - after all, ambiguities, contradictions, tensions and paradoxes are the very stuff of it (Bull & Tovey; Cucuzzella, 2011;

Gaver et al., 2003). Likewise, meaningfulness is not something we can impose upon a design situation: it can only be something that *comes out of* genuine and active involvement.

We do not control the various elements that enter into the design event. Quite on the contrary, they have meaning and relevance in that situation to the degree that we are caught up in the process, to the extent that those entities reveal themselves, indicate possibilities, and lead us in a process of disclosure. (Snodgrass & Coyne, 1996, p. 32)

Yes, the surrender into design's deep uncertainty is not passive but active (Akama et al., 2018, p. 81): deliberate and demanding. If I think that I am not already involved or that design does not involve me personally, my design work is just a procedure, an exercise in compliance, an empty pantomime (Wendt, 2018, p. 118). Perhaps the greatest risk is that I fail to take a risk, or that I fail to see that the risk is mine to take?

A call to consciousness

Given how hidden design is, and how intimately involved we are with it, it is easy for design to be a work of deliberate deception, hoodwinkery and craftiness (Flusser, 1999; Singleton, 2014). With design, "what you see is not what you get" (Fry, 2014, p. 12). Yes, the dark side of design hangs like a shadow on every design endeavour. Design can be maliciously wrought as wilful destruction or domination, and it can also wreak havoc through ignorance and carelessness (Nelson & Stolterman, 2012).

As such, design philosophy literature abounds with designers making plaintive calls to fellow designers to exercise a discipline of responsible action (Buchanan, 2001b). Principled, responsible design is now mainstream, and in many areas, expected practice. These practice arcs out of the philosophies underpinning sustainable design (Chapman & Gant, 2008; Fuad-Luke, 2013; Manzini, 2007) and socially responsible design (Margolin & Margolin, 2002; Morelli, 2007; Papanek, 1972). At the same time new thought, philosophically wrought, drives new principles guiding design practice - and even new fields of design, for instance 'Transition Design' (Irwin, 2015; Irwin, Kossoff, & Tonkinwise, 2015), in which new ways of designing are encouraged to naturally emerge from the process itself.

Design is always rethinking itself. Perhaps this is because it advances on 'models of being' (Dilnot, 2005, p. 42)? Yes, design can obscure or distort human being, but it can also amplify and exemplify it, because to be in design is to notice how we are as human beings,

and to open new ways of being, including new ways of being in design (Akama, 2012). A consciousness of design requires a disclosure of design within one's being (Fry, 2008). Designers, writes Snodgrass (2001),

do not stop moving, but are 'moved', that is, are moved toward something, go out towards and are drawn to it. Moving toward is a being moved, in its several senses. The designer is moved towards things and ideas as he or she designs, and is moved by them. They propel her on the path. (p. 7)

Moved as such, designing involves moments of personal transformation (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Fuad-Luke, 2013). Might we think then of design 'movements' – such as Transition Design – as a necessary “coming to consciousness” of the design practitioner (Margolin, 1998, p. 88), simultaneously both deeply personal *and* socially transformative? Might this be an existential address in dialectic relation (d'Anjou, 2007)? Designing, after all,

deals with the profound and existential issues in a very tangible way. As a designer, you have to think about the relation between what can and what ought to be done. Design reveals, in its very practical activities, very philosophical questions concerning how people can and should live their lives. (Löwgren & Stolterman, 2004, p. 11)

Yes, designing reveals and deals with our being in the world, bringing axiological matters right into its charge. But how can we orient rightly, when design's dealings are 'on the run', involved with the unknown and unknowable, and with moving situations? Even within our own design projects, we cannot possibly be aware of all the elements in play (Logan & van Alstyne, 2007). Perhaps we can think about it this way: design's address is not a call to know everything about what is going on, nor is it about dealing with things in the correct or best way – how can it be? No, I suspect that design's address is more a call to caring to be involved; to take that risk and deliberately turn towards design's dark-and-light, open-and-closed tensions and difficulties. We are called to come face to face with design's “most uncertain, contradictory, dangerous, and promising summons” (Nelson & Stolterman, 2012, p. 188) – in the world, through oneself, in oneself.

Our figure of freedom, and the educative address

The point is that we have a choice: perhaps even that design *is* choice. In design, our basic orientations are made tangible in the world, and then we act. In the first place, we can

work against the flow of nature, to persuade and compel new models of being (Papanek, 1972; Wann, 1995), or we can work *with* the forces of nature, through trying to understand the deep structures of human approaches to the world (Dorst, 2015). In both cases, we are called to be conscientious in our design involvements in the world. How is it that we want to be? Let us not mince words: we need, as these scholars (Akkach, 2010, Fry, 2010, Willis, 2010) petition, nothing less than a *sacred design now*. After all, “the sacred is inseparable from the political” (Willis, 2010, p. 6).

What then, as the clock ticks down to midnight, is its appropriate means? An answer springs to mind: declare a holy war on the unsustainable. Not a war fought with weapons, but with thinking, with powerful ideas. Its targets are many: instrumentalist (un)thinking, commodity-centred individualism, technocentrism, ethnocentrism, liberal pluralism, cynicism. (Willis, 2010, p. 6).

In designing, I make a move: I open the world as it never was and bring it into new motion; a world which,

though already half-designed, is always becoming... In such a world, design is always for potential, for what is already becoming. It is an act of reframing experience in a way that points beyond the reframing. This involves the designer giving to the user a surplus, which allows them to play into their potential. (McCarthy & Wright, 2004, p. 196)

Yes, design spins itself out of one’s being and becomes part of the fabric of our shared being in the world. In this way, even while the locus of design is anchored in the being of the individual (d’Anjou, 2007), design gains a life of its own in ways that do not belong to me: I will never know what my design touches (Mitcham, 2001) – but it returns to me in kind. In offering design into experience, my work is deeply personal, but at the same time, vast; it exceeds me, and goes wide and long.

In the encounter between myself and the world, I shift | my shifts move my designing. Likewise, I encounter myself in my designing | my designing shifts me back | and shifts the world.

Fry (2005) calls design our ‘figure of freedom’ (p. 139), both creating freely within limits and curtailing freedom through limitation. A conception like this also, I would add, figures new limits by which it might perpetuate itself: in this way design figures its own freedom to be. Yes, the notion of design as ‘figure of freedom’ seems to perfectly capture and

communicate its powerful opening-and-closing forces of its being, while permitting its inherent ambiguity.

How might Fry's notion of design as our figure of freedom resonate with other philosophers of design? Let us imaginatively ask a few. Peter-Paul Verbeek's (2010) philosophy of human-made artefacts argues against the concept of humans passively besieged by technology, and highlights instead the active, creative thrust of humans mediating designed things; as such Verbeek might say that design *makes possible* our freedom to create. Similarly, Tim Ingold's (2010) philosophy of 'things' asks us to appreciate the entangled co-manifestations within which our designing takes place. From this perspective, might we open to the energetic traces of the freedoms *already in play*, and stand in awe at the dynamic figurations that we live? And, in Anne-Marie Willis's (2006) philosophy of ontological designing, which reveals how the forces of being are brought to bear in our designing - because what we design acts back on us - we might understand the figure of freedom as a figure of deep responsibility; indeed, a figuration *of ourselves*. Even those designers who might not claim an explicit philosophy of design express their philosophies implicitly in their works, and it is possible with a hermeneutic reading to see this same figure of freedom illuminating their works. For instance, Herbert Simon's (1996) and Nigel Cross's (2001b) works, used universally as foundational texts in design education, can be understood essentially as meditations on *the way* that humans pursue the figures of form and function through exercising their freedoms within given constraints. Yes, whichever way we turn, design can be understood as our 'figure of freedom' – a freedom of human proportion.

If we accept this understanding of what is design, we can expect it to see it all forms of design, including learning design. What do you think? Do you recognise design's signature as the figure of freedom in *your* work? Perhaps it does not matter if we call our learning design-type work by the name of 'design', for whatever we call it, should these same existential cautions and excitements that attend the figuring of freedom not also apply? But if learning design *is* a kind of design, it is bound, through the figure of freedom, to make its own unmediated address: an 'educative' address, a caring for the educative endeavour. The educative address as such surely speaks in the existential register: it speaks of ethics, possibility, and responsible action; for "open contexts" and "the appearance of freedom" (Greene, 1988, p. xi). As Greene (1992) writes, so powerfully:

We are charged, we who care about thinking and teaching, to study that equation and keep trying to discover what does not "add up." We may be able to find connections that enable us to do something about the desire to submerge in a comfortable life, the tendency to believe blindly, the dedication to profit, even the self-infatuation of the few. And surely we can do more than we have about loving the earth. It will take critical consciousness, imagination, thoughtfulness of many kinds. It will take the opening of spaces where people can come together, where they can choose. It will take disclosures and refusals and the shaping of new visions. It will take thinking what we are doing, knowing there is no stopping place and that the search must continue on. (p. 15)

Yes, design's own address is a call into a concerned educative *involvement*, a call to action. Here, then, in this hitherto hidden world of design philosophy, was confirmation that my hunch to open up learning design within a structure of 'being' was possible, and that a deeper understanding of learning design was not only a serious scholarly question, but a necessary one. But even a hermeneutic reading of the design literature can only go so far towards real understanding. Beyond this point, the question of what and where is the design part of learning design must be encountered phenomenologically, *from within the experience itself*. Now, it is only by way of being that a slow arc to an originary, 'undesigned' learning design can be accomplished. For this I turn to the stories of university teachers themselves.

Learning, are you dancing with design?

Learning, are you dancing with design, together for a song?

When you are dancing, do you lead – or do you feel the lead invite you on?

Are you close together – or do you move as one?

Or lean into the space between, to singly belong?

Or – are *you* design, moving where you will

and when you like, and if you choose it, staying still?

Are you at home? Where else are you?

With, as, from, and to.

Where it comes from, so do you.

Six: The inner workings of the question

There was always a problem about how to write about all this – liveliness being somewhat secret, being what is experienced on one’s own, moving often in the dark between levels.

- Nicholas Mosley, *Hopeful Monsters*

Introduction: The question turns

So begins the first of the four findings chapters of this research. As a first foray into philosophical interpretation, this chapter is itself a question about “how to write about all of this”, and, looking back, it strikes me that all the intimacies of the workings of the question that I explore on the next pages – the asking self, the welling of possibility, and marking out, for instance – all these seem to speak just as much to the penetrating task of writing about them, as they do to the phenomenon of my enquiry – thus demonstrating the way that the phenomenon gives itself in the manner of itself.

In the broadest existential context, existence is itself question, and who I am myself is a question. These existential undercurrents silently accompany me as I go about my daily comings and goings, concerned with my work, things, people, and situations. I may be standing in the blind spot, but I am always turning on the question, and by this existential action, I know myself – barely – as a human being oriented to meaning, concerned with the affairs of my world, and clinging to what I dare not lose, yet cannot quite touch.

The question does not belong exclusively to learning design work, but the question, it turns out, is so constitutional to the phenomenon that without it, learning design would not be itself. The question comes into view as an *intimacy* of the work, being, as Mosley says, “what is experienced on one’s own, moving often in the dark between levels”. The question, as a phenomenal essence of what it is to be in an intimate, personal experience of learning design, may seem ordinary and obvious (surely signatures of phenomenal recognition!), but when understood from the perspective of the institutional learning design, it is also significant. In the ontic dressing of learning design, the workings of the question are regarded

only as a device for properly framing problems to be solved – in other words, the answer is favoured over the question. But the workings of the question move in us at deep, existential levels, too. Its presence shows us that there is hiddenness and moreness, and that we are “moving in the dark”. Yes, what shows on the surface of our work has its inner roots in larger questions about what it is to be. The question is that which seems to reverberating in the spaces between our work and the person we are – between our doing and our being.

In the academics’ self-told stories that inform this chapter, and in their philosophical interpretation, you will see for yourself, I trust, the intimate ‘inner workings’ of the question in one’s being in learning design.

The asking, acting self

In this first story we hear from Carrie, who teaches management studies to postgraduate students. We join Carrie in the classroom, in the event of teaching. Yes, we plunge in unhesitatingly to where learning design really ‘lives’ – not as something that precedes teaching, but inseparable from teaching, as an animating principle of teaching. Here is a phenomenon that pays no attention to where and when it appears, but occurs because it must – and it appears, in this teaching event, in the mode of a question.

‘The chatterboxes’

My grandson was playing with chatterboxes and I thought ‘they’re so much fun!’ [laughs]. And then I looked when I was going through the website, they said ‘use chatterbox for this this-and-this’. So I got to class one day. We’d gone through the lecture and it took a lot longer than it actually should have and we had this whole thing to do, and I thought ‘oh god, how can we do that quickly and engaging?’ because they were all really tired, we had four-hour sessions. But this week we’ve got to cover this. It was ‘what are the eight environmental influences on a business?’ and I had the lecture slides. It would have taken me half an hour to go through each one. And I thought: ‘chatterboxes’! So I quickly downloaded the thing. I couldn’t make them [laughs] so I said ‘who knows how to make a chatterbox?’ ‘oh yep-yep-yep’ .. and so – we made these chatterboxes. What they had to do was put eight little questions – eight! Perfect! – and under one they put the column ‘this is the environmental influence’ etcetera and an explanation underneath.

Oh, I was scared. I thought they’re going to go ‘nnaahhh...’ – but they didn’t, they just embraced it. I could not believe it. This group of students who usually don’t even open up a

textbook – because they had to look at their textbook to get the answers – they make their chatterboxes, colouring them all in, going through the textbook, looking for the answers to put in their chatterbox. I took photos with my phone because I was just gobsmacked about how they just got into it, and were having fun, and that took like twenty minutes and – done! [laughs]. It was just... *magic*. (Carrie, Story 3)

In this story, the simple act of asking what can be done and then decisively acting shows us how meaningfulness abides as a possibility in any teaching situation. We know that meaningfulness is here somewhere because Carrie chose to tell the story in the first place – and she chose it from her palette of teaching experiences as an experience of learning design, as such. But, in a meta kind of way, what is meaningful in this story is the appearance of meaningfulness itself, within a seemingly ordinary and typical situation of teaching. It is not every day that we are gobsmacked by our own manifestation of *magic* into the ordinary structure of the situation. Such experiences have their own psychic resonance through time; they create structures of meaningfulness, if you like, which sustain us.

Being in situation

Tangled up in this story are the involvements of situation, self, and the action of the question. So, let us start by examining a bit more carefully what a situation is. A situation is not just a circumstance, it is an inescapable existential reality. As Jaspers explains, (1932/1970b, p. 178), one cannot step ‘out’ of one situation without finding oneself in another. That is why a situation is also existential - it has implications for one’s existence (Latzel, 1957). Yet a situation is not a fixed reality, but is, according to Jaspers (1932/1970b), always in a state of flux. Neither is a situation ever fully disclosed; it is ‘bottomless’, and always more than can be known (1932/1970a, p. 44). In the first place, Carrie recognises that, in running out of time, the event of teaching now becomes ‘a situation’ – a situation that she is ‘in’. It is as if, out of the ordinary stream of goings-on, *the way things are* start to press in, bear in upon her being (Barnett, 2004), almost as if they have a kind of being or life of their own (Schön, 1983). The situation announces itself.

Now, Carrie has a choice. She can drift along with the situation, be tossed about by it, letting things happen - or she can act within it, as she does. She may not have a choice about whether to be in the situation, but she has a choice about *how* to be within in. Yes, the situation bears in upon a person, but at the same time one is also bearing upon the situation

with one's choices. In this way, being in situation is mutual, involved, interpretive and hermeneutic in character (Heidegger, 1927/2010, p. 222). Perhaps this is why Schön (1983) says that a situation can "reveal new meanings" (p. 163). In Carrie's acting within the situation, the chatterbox activity that she improvises is more than an elegant solution to a circumstantial dilemma. Sure, she must be pleased with her activity choice, and with the student's embrace of the activity, but something else has happened in this situation that is powerful enough to leave her "gobsmacked", as she says: some *new* meaning has been revealed through this situation, and it has to do with Carrie's acting within it.

The question of the self

It is possible to interpret what is going on in terms of agency or capability, and if this were not a philosophical dissertation, this might be enough to explain why this situation is so powerful. But before agency or capability, Carrie is a 'self' who is asking, deciding, acting within and upon the situation. But how can the 'self' be understood? In an ordinary way, says Heidegger (1927/2010), the self is the everyday being "which I myself always am" (p. 53). For Jan Smuts (1936, p. 236), the self is that which appears to the senses and is central to our experience of reality. Dan Zahavi (2003) goes further, holding that the self is *itself* experiential reality in "first-personal givenness" (pp. 59-62). The self is, somehow, self-given. But to speak of the self in terms of 'being' is more difficult, and our attempts to do it 'fall short', for "we possess being only in its interpretations. To speak of it is to interpret it" (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 77).

I cannot say what I am, but I speak for myself... in this way I know I am 'more' than what I can tell.

Since I cannot really *know* my being, "*to be is to decide about being*" (1932/1970a, p. 56). For Jaspers (1932/1970b), the question of what is 'being' is to be actively *claimed*, for 'what I am' is constituted only in my deliberate acts of freedom – including my asking and acting in situations. My being is 'freely willed' and belongs to me by virtue of my responsible struggle for it, through my every decisive act, where again and again I have the chance to set aside whatever I feel is untrue about myself, and so "gain my more profound, my intrinsic, my infinite, my true self" (p. 44). In a strange privative kind of reclamation, then, I gain myself

through discarding what is *not* myself, and “come to myself as perishing” - and *this*, says Jaspers, is “the phenomenon of self-being” (p. 44).

Yes, it is ‘self’ that makes it possible for ‘being’ to be an issue at all, and it is only as a self-being that I can ask about self and being. Indeed, says Jaspers (1932/1970b), it is in the very asking that I claim my self:

In natural unconcern I do not ask about myself. I accomplish the ends that are closest to me, and I think about my tasks. I say “I,” but it does not trouble me in what sense I am.

Then I find that I can ask. I should like to know *what* I am, and think of the human species to which I belong. Or I should like to know *who* I am, and so I ask what I mean by saying “I myself”. I do not ask either question at random, as if my interest in them were the same as in innumerable things I have come across, in the world. In this questioning I am not only curious but *involved*. I awaken from my unconcern. (p. 25)

“*Then I find that I can ask*”. Yes: I ask because I can, because “I seek my own self for the sake of the self” (p. 16). Even while standing on the blind spot, I can ask about the spot, and in this strange move, I constitute my being by my very asking about it. Like Jaspers goes on to say, “in the deceptive expectation of coming to myself I am left with no originality other than that of my questions” (p. 36) - and so, as such, “what I myself am, therefore, always remains a question” (1938/1971, p. 38). Open on all sides, then, I am self-being ‘as freedom’ (1951/2003, pp. 63-64).

The crack between two planes

For Carrie in her teaching situation, her asking about what to do is at the same time very practical and situated, and on another level, so to speak, a way to claim her self-being as freedom. Jaspers (1932/1970a) speaks of these two levels as *planes*. For instance, in reference to being in situation, he writes: “on quite a different plane it is still my own self that decides what it is ... something rests with me alone” (p. 56). The idea of two planes gives a kind of shorthand way to see any situation as both seemingly quite ordinary, and at the same time, profound with existential meaning. Jaspers calls these two realities *mundane existence* and *possible Existenz*. Mundane existence is the everyday reality of being caught up in the world and being in situations – like Carrie, running out of time to cover the content of the lesson she had planned. Possible Existenz is that aspect of my being which is “an open

possibility” (1932/1970b, p. 4): it is beyond anything we can think it is, so it cannot be qualified by saying what it is, though it can be negatively defined by saying what it is not. Possible Existenz is that aspect of self-being that relates to itself, beyond cognition. To say there is ‘more’ to existence than what can be experienced is to point to *possible* Existenz, an idea only utterable from the ‘borderline’ of the world and Existenz (1932/1970a, pp. 55-59).

The separation of my self-being into two planes is not literal, of course; it is a device, that is all, for understanding that there may be things beyond understanding. The notion of two planes is useful, too, for a philosophic interpretation of the lived reality of our work, and may explain why that which we do not intellectually understand can still be personally meaningful. In mundane existence, I ‘permeate’ myself as possible Existenz, for it is only through being involved in and opening myself fully to the phenomenal world of my everyday existence that I might realise my possible Existenz (Jaspers, 1962/1967, p. 99). In other words, the world makes Existenz possible because it is only the world that can show me the limits of the world as mundane existence. It is in the world that Existenz experiences itself (p. 283); where “being will approach itself... seeking to find itself” (1932/1970a, p. 59). Jaspers (1932/1970b) explains that this takes place in every act, every decision:

It is in many small acts – acts unnoticeable in detail and yet on the whole determining my being – that I take the steps in which I win or lose myself. I may resist decision [and just] let things happen. Or, without any violence, I may calmly and just as unnoticeably go my way in small inner and outer actions, ripening to stay myself in real decisions. (p. 162)

Yes, ‘real’ decisions, that can be posed through questions. The question seems to act as a kind of concentrating prism through which we might access the unsayableness of possible Existenz. Perhaps the question serves that borderline between what can be known or imagined, and what cannot. Perhaps it cracks it open the planes. Like Gadamer (1975/2004) says, “when a question arises, it breaks open the being of an object” (p. 371). In the Heideggerian vein,

Questioning unlocks what is essential in all things. It forces us into the most extreme simplification of our destiny, and eliminates all the mindless scattering of the university into various professional disciplines. If we wish to pursue such radical questioning, we should realize that it exposes us to the most intimate and most extreme danger, which comes only in the world of the spirit. (Harman, 2007, p. 98)

- which may be a different way of saying we act as beings in freedom when we question, because we act within the unimaginable, our possible Existenz. Perhaps then, our questions can also be used to shape and even create situations within which we can act (1932/1970b, p. 178); within which other questions can be posed. As Maxine Greene (1988) says, our questions are not 'an interiority' but "embodied, thrusting into the lived and the perceived" (p. 20). Indeed, there is a bold transgressive intimacy about the question that registers in terms of its intensity. Carrie does not know how to act within the situation, but by asking, she breaks open the situation and makes something possible (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 374). Carrie acts by asking. In this sense her question acts twice: it precedes mundane action but is itself also its own *existential* action.

The decisive question

Let's slow down the event of asking and see what is going on. Carrie's first action, if you like, is to seize the situation, collapsing everything about it – seen and unseen - into a single moment, into which she spontaneously makes an appeal from herself to herself, as if calling across the planes: "*I thought oh god, how can we do that quickly and engagingly?*" Carrie's appeal takes the shape of a perfectly formed question, by which I mean, the form of the question perfectly discerns and captures the situation's dimensions – that the lesson's remaining content must be covered in a manner "*quickly and engagingly*". The question has arisen from the situation – been squeezed into being, in concentrated form, so to speak - and in its arising it becomes part of the situation, and thus, as if in some kind of reverse hermeneutic, with its asking action, '*un-understandingly*' exceeds and thus transforms the situation.

The question is so decisive and so perfect, there is no question about the question. Now another action quickly follows on its tail, which is the action of the response. The perfectly formed question has a perfect and effortless match in its answer - chatterboxes with eight sides – "*eight! perfect!*". But how is this possible? Was the answer already present for Carrie? Why not - as Heidegger says, we are guided beforehand by what we seek (1927/2010, p. 4). Or as Gadamer (1975/2004) writes, a question has its own 'sense', in that it has its own direction and horizons (pp. 372-372). It is as if Carrie presupposed the answer *in* the question so that, in forming the exact dimensions of the question, she created a kind of container that 'scooped up' the answer in the shape of itself. But it does not really matter whether the

question presupposes its answer or not, because in either case the action of the question breaks open the situation and creates a space of possibility in which a response falls in, as if already present.

Sometimes, instead of being perfectly formed, the question is instead, perfectly open, as Carrie tells in another story. Here, in this experience of being in learning design, Carrie seems to ask not because she must, but simply because she can, plying the situation open for maximum liveliness:

‘It just falls in’

You get there, you look at the group and you go, ‘this is the material, how can we do it today?’ and it just [snaps fingers] – often it just comes. Or, I picture the class and me and how we can interact – and me in particular, because I don’t want to be boring for me either (laughs). ‘Here we are... we’re doing this today... how can we do that? Oh! That’s a good idea!’ and it just *pumph!* - it just falls in. (Carrie, Story 2)

As effortlessly as it did before in her Chatterboxes story, by its asking, the answer “*just falls in*”. In both cases, the answer arrives with the same decisiveness as the question. Why not? Whether perfectly formed or perfectly open, there is no ‘right’ answer in this situation, there is only a decisive action. Carrie has no time to waste on deliberations but must stake the rest of the lesson on this moment – the rest of the lesson, and her own self-being, as she says, “*me in particular*”. For this, Carrie must come into what Jaspers calls ‘resolute action’ (1932/1970b, pp. 158-160). Jaspers tells us that resolute action is different from calculatively deciding between options; resolute action rises from a deeper place and in its rising, *moves me* (p. 159). This kind of action ‘is’ who I am. Jaspers says of this,

My resolution makes me feel the freedom in which I no longer merely decide about things but about myself, the freedom in which I can no longer separate the choice and me because *I am this free choice*. Choice alone appears as a choice between objectivities; freedom is the choice of my own self. This is why I cannot step out once again to choose between being myself and not being myself, as if freedom were nothing but a tool of mine. I am by choosing, rather; if I am not, I choose not. What I am myself is left open, of course, because of decisions still unmade; to that extent I am not yet. But this not-being, in the sense of not-being-definitive in phenomenal existence, is illuminated by the existential certainty of my being where I choose and thus originate in resolution. (p. 160)

In the mundane existence of her teaching, Carrie does not *need* to pose the question ‘on the spot’ about how the lesson should be. It is not that she comes into resolute action because she has no choice in the matter and must find a way to bear the situation. Nonetheless, she brings this very situation into being, forcing herself into resolute action, as it were. But why? Might it be because Carrie knows that the only thing she can *really* know about the situation is that it is not really knowable, except that the more she is ‘in’ it, the realer it is for her. Yes, the only thing that is certain is resoluteness itself (Heidegger, 1927/2010, pp. 286-295). How true this is of learning design work, which, whether in the thick of the teaching event or at any time before or even after it, one has no way of knowing if or how learning will actually transpire. So we can see that one’s learning design is always occurring within the arc of imagination, and its results are immeasurable. Our work rises to meet a *situation*, not a problem - the possibility of learning is not a problem to be solved!

As teachers, we do not have learning in our grasp: all we have is ourselves. Nevertheless, we can ask about asking, and so take action on the question as a meaningful, lived concern. The question is the teacher’s hammer for learning - should we not strike it for ourselves? After all, as William Barrett (1958/2011) observed, “in all existential thinking it is we ourselves, the questioners, who are ultimately in question” (p. 267).

The welling moreness

We can think of the question like a well, conveying into experience its depth dimension. A well through which, Blackham (1952, p. 55) says, evoking mysterious existential forces, submerged possibilities might phenomenally rise into being. The question, after all, cannot be asked without presupposing that there is possibility; that there is more to know, to do, to be. Indeed, the question affirms that there is more in my reality than my present experience. But the question, even though it may be decisively formed, is not like a bucket that goes down into the well to draw up a possible answer. No, the question is *itself* the very openness of possibility whose essence is both to open and to keep open (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 310), and which by its asking *decisively conveys* the very welling-up of moreness into experience. Through acting we can step into this phenomenal upwelling conveyance; we can decisively put ourselves in the way of the phenomenon as it gives.

Then: 'what' the question breaks open and keeps open is perhaps just - oneself? Opening to the moreness do we ontologically break down the difference between 'oneself' and the moreness? Perhaps becoming 'more' of oneself - or at least, becoming synonymous *with* 'moreness' and, thusly saturated, receiving oneself as possible Existenz in that welling up and pouring forth? How might this be possible? Spiegelberg (1970, p. 31) writes that it is the richness of an experience that brings experience into one's awareness. Perhaps I can say then that moreness is not quantitative but qualitative, being like an intensification of existence, or a collapse of separateness, which brings one sharply into contact with oneself.

Standing at the brink: More to me

Now we meet Edward, who has been given course design responsibilities as a casual academic. For Edward, deeper, bigger questions exceed, contain and bear in upon his work. The uncertainties he experiences in his learning design work are not just the intrinsic uncertainties and possibilities of the contexts and events of the educative endeavour, but are personal and protracted, mixed up with the ongoing precarity of his employment situation. Edward's story makes it clear that a sense of our own self-being cannot be disentangled from the work we 'do': "*they are not entirely separate*", as he says:

'The bigger project'

I've had days where recently I'm not even sure if I even want to be involved in academia anymore. There's this bigger question. It's not even about 'there's this course, there's this project, and it's in this particular location'. There's a bigger project happening which is my project - who I am, what I want to be in the world. They're not entirely separate. (Edward, Story 5)

We are not privy to the details of Edward's position, but whatever is going on, he is standing, wavering, on the edge of it. It is as if something essential has dropped out, so that what once had substance and possibility for him is now hollow. The specifics of Edward's bigger question are his alone and known only to him, but in some universal way we can see that this is a question of meaningfulness. As Jaspers (1932/1970b) says, and to which I am sure we can all attest, without meaningfulness, our work is just task performance, it is empty, an 'outward order' only (p. 8). And, if there is emptiness in one's work, a soul feels empty too (1951/2003,

p. 121). Edward is standing in the presence of 'lack', the not-being present of something that 'ought to be' (Heidegger, 1927/2010, p. 272).

Does lack well up as an ironic, privative moreness? There is no lack of lack, for sure...

Into this existential emptiness, Edward seems to cry out "there is more to me still" (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 33)! Perhaps the qualitative substance that we seek when we are bereft of meaningfulness is not for 'filling-up' the hollowness, as it were, but for "absenting the absence", as Roy Bhaskar (2016, p. 115) suggests, so that we might once again be present with the meaningfulness that is *already* present, and reclaim the world "as it always already is – intrinsically valuable and meaningful" and again "relate to it as such in our practices" (p. 169). Yes, perhaps the moreness that Edward seeks is to return 'once more' to the middle of the goings-on of life *as if it meant something*. But in this vein, the self that asks about the void has already claimed its meaningfulness, for we are always suspended between, as Jaspers (1932/1970b) puts it, closedness and openness as ways of being: between the "superficial regulation of life" on the one hand, and the "true enthusiasm of faith and love" on the other (p. 231).

Suspended thus, Edward stands precariously, hesitating on "the brink of being" (Polanyi, 1958/1974, p. 319), perhaps shuddering at the choices he is facing (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 231). If Jaspers were at Edward's elbow, I think he would sympathise. On the one hand, there is an existential imperative to draw oneself into situations that will yield oneself as possible Existenz:

If I want to be true, I must dare to make mistakes and put myself in the wrong; I have to carry things to extremes, to place them on the razor's edge, if I want to bring them a real, truthful decision. (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 63)

...and on the other hand, there is the urge to find solace in an order that includes us:

If our lives are not to be diffuse and meaningless, they must find their place in an order. In our daily affairs we must be sustained by a comprehensive principle, we must find meaning in an edifice of work, fulfilment, and sublime moments... Then our lives, even in the performance of monotonous tasks, will be permeated by a mood arising from our conscious participation in a meaning. (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 120)

Here between these two modes of being – risking oneself for the sake of the self, and finding depth in a larger order – we leave Edward, standing in question. But we should not be disturbed by these disturbances in our being; letting oneself be addressed by the question of meaningfulness is what makes us human, says Viktor Frankl (1948/2000), and it is our responsible response to the question that constitutes the very “essence of existence”:

Man is not he who poses the question, What is the meaning of life? but he who is asked this question, for it is life itself that poses it to him. And man has to answer to life by answering for life; he has to respond by being responsible; in other words, the response is necessarily a response-in-action. While we respond to life "in action" we are also responding in the "here and now." What is always involved in our response is the concreteness of a person and the concreteness of the situation in which he is involved. (p. 29)

The situation is an opportunity to witness oneself, to actively turn to face oneself (Jaspers, 1932/1970a, p. 44) - especially, when the situation seems to exceed me, to bear in upon me with its forces, overwhelming me. But like Frankl says, meaning will come if one is ‘courageously patient’ (1948/2000, p. 134). Revelatory grace unfolds slowly in this bigger realm. The alternative is to resolutely set out on the search for meaning as if finding an answer does not matter: a searching already full of its own rich meaning. But wait – how can we seek the end of searching? For, at the end of every question, while there is a moment of reprieve, “there is at once a new beginning of questioning” (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 55).

You may be asking why I have included this story, which at first glance has seemingly nothing to do with learning design as such. I include it because questions do not respect categories of work and non-work - indeed they actively transgress categories. While we remain in question about the deeper questions, we invite what is truly important to present. Whatever we do not take for granted holds open the edges of our experience. We are no different from the student, in this place: we wonder who we are becoming.

But whatever can be said and asked about the question must remain always somewhat in question: the question exemplifies self-ruination. What I mean is – at the end of every surety, the question will always flow back in, like the existential undertow of a deeply ironical cosmic wave, drawing everything back itself, calling everything back into question, thus renewing it - *perhaps?*

The looming next

So far, the workings of the question have revealed themselves to be strong: decisive, disturbing, larger than life. But sometimes, there is no phenomenal ‘announcement’, it is more like an intensification of what is already close by, a vague looming of action or asking yet to come, as if the question is waiting to be posed before coming into full view. The question waits its turn.

In the following story, university teacher Astrid describes this sense of a looming ‘next’ in her work:

‘It looms large’

The whole time we’ve been talking I have the online space sitting right there [gestures to the side] as something altogether that I don’t utilise properly that I think has tools in it and ways of doing things that could help me, that could be done differently. Ways that I could do things differently and better in the classroom that I haven’t even got to yet. I often have little electronic icons in my head [laughs] that are loosely based on the icons in the learning management system. In terms of my design development over the last three years, the online stuff is the next thing for me; it looms large for me. It’s a picture that is sitting there with me constantly. And it’s integral to the design. (Astrid, Story 13)

For Astrid, the ‘online stuff’ is broodily abiding, as if suspended in the air around her, close by and intimate. The workings of the question in this mode stand in stark contrast to Heidegger’s (1927/2010) ‘idle curiosity’ which is always seeking out newness for its own sake (p. 166), and then immediately moving on (p. 331). With the idle question I reach away; with the looming next, something ‘more’ than me bears in on me and reaches me.

But what is it about the online stuff that insists? Is it ‘possibility’ that “crowds in on us” (Heidegger, 1927/2010, p. 181)? Or, is it the question that crowds in on us, “presses itself on us” until “we can no longer avoid it and persist in our accustomed opinion” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 375)? It is all this and more, since possibility and the question are both modes of moreness. I think it is as-yet-unsayable yet-not-unforeseeable *significance* that is pressing in, weighty but waiting, like a harbinger of meaningfulness to come. In Astrid’s experience, the mood of the looming next is not foreboding in any sense, it is more like being accompanied. It seems that Astrid can wait for the online stuff’s *Eigenzeit* - for the time that is

proper to it - knowing it will ripen in meaningfulness as she goes about her present concerns. Perhaps the meaningfulness leaks in already?

While the online stuff is yet to inform Astrid's lesson plans with new significance, nonetheless significance is held in waiting through the representational form of the visual icons of the online teaching platform: "*it's a picture that is sitting there*", says Astrid. The icons stand in for experience to come, as if they have, by their existing forms, gone ahead and booked the space in advance, promising significance to come. But Astrid must be careful – these icons are already loaded with designed meanings of their own. Marion's (2002) exposition on the phenomenality of the icon grants the icon its own exertion over us, the beholder (pp. 232-233), as if it holds us in its gaze. The icon's gaze "makes weigh on me... [it] gives itself only to be endured" (p. 232). The icon is like an eye, a *design eye*, which is not – or not yet – our own. There is more to the icon than what we know or understand about it; the icon is like a world unto itself. What these icons personally mean for Astrid is the interpretive task ahead of Astrid – it like their purpose must be 'learned'. Indeed, as Marion says, the icon "opens a teleology" (p. 233). The online learning icon surely redoubles its educative significance. These icons in fact, when left to themselves in the online learning environment, stand in for the teacher, bypassing the teacher, and speak directly with their designed meanings to the student. Teacher and student alike are equally subject to the icon's gaze.

But while it is easy to imagine that the 'online stuff' that Astrid must attend to next is somehow represented by and mysteriously hiding in these icons is to miss the deeper onto-existential point. No, the 'stuff' that haunts the margins of Astrid's present reality is more than the open-edged realm of online significances: it is more than anything that can be known, said or imagined. What looms in on Astrid is the moreness that she will learn about herself as she goes about her 'next'. Perhaps she knows, deep down in her bones, she will receive and learn of herself, for herself, what the icons already seem to know; it is just a question of *when*.

Marking out, I bring myself to bear

If possibilities give themselves unendingly, as Jaspers says they do (1932/1970b, p. 290), and there is always a looming next, might this moreness be distilled or delimited into something of human proportions that can be manageably worked with in the teaching

situation? Possibility must be somehow sorted out. Now, the workings of the question come into play with a different action. Just as the question breaks open possibilities of the self and situation, so too can the question close around them. In learning design work, like any kind of design work, it is a matter of working with the constraints, and I can use my questions, choices and actions as a way of discerning within the moreness what I should preserve and what I should refuse, in a kind of sifting and sorting of significance. In this mode, resoluteness is not just about finding a way within oneself to be decisively involved within certain uncertainty, but also about bringing some limits to bear – even though it pains me to wonder what I might miss out on when I choose. We must be resolute in action whether that action is affirmative and generative, or privative and delimiting in its character. Or, as Carrie says, making it all quite clear, “*you’ve got to draw the line somewhere*”:

‘I drew the line’

All that [learning design] work I did on the weekend - I stopped because this is all unpaid work! [laughs]. They pay us four hours for coordinating, over a whole fourteen week semester. I would have spent six hours on Saturday and I thought ‘you know what, this is ridiculous, you’ve got all this marking and stuff to do, you’ve got to draw the line somewhere’. So I drew the line. But I still feel like I could do more in that connection between those online activities and incorporating more, which I will, and I’ll spend the time doing it. (Carrie, Story 6)

Yes, the moreness presses unendingly, but its promise is not matched by unending time. It is time that compels us into arbitrary delimiting action (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 158).

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which whatever is denied now remains in reserve. Carrie seems to know that even though she has drawn the line for the present, she will *inevitably* pursue the moreness.

Arbitrarily delimiting learning design action is wise and practical, but what is going on here can also be examined philosophically for its deeper, onto-existential intimacies. We can start with design itself for understanding – that is, we can start with the word ‘design’. The etymological root of the word design is to ‘mark out’, which provides an access point to design’s original, open-closed nature. Marking out seems to happen on both planes of being. In mundane existence, I mark or recognise what can be done right now within the constraints of the situation. But the boundary between what could be done and what should be done is

not absolute but *arbitrary*, and the arbitrary act depends on me alone; it is “spontaneity coincident with my being I” (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 156) - it is a doing synonymous with my being. As such, from the perspective of my being as possible Existenz, what I claim with this marking out is nothing short of *who I am* and *how I am*. Yes, even the self-imposed constraints of the situation bring me before myself and show me my freedom. Thus, even when I am stopping something, I animate everything anew from the ‘font’ of my being (p. 159-160). In short, when I am at work, on one level I am ‘working’ on myself, no matter what I am doing. Says Jaspers (1957a), “by his way of life, by his daily small deeds, by his great decisions, the individual testifies to himself as to what is possible” (p. 70). In learning design work it is no different.

These affirmations of self-being are intimate, unseen by others. Others only hold me responsible “for my actions in their factuality” (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 160), those actions that can be seen. But my asking and acting exceeds what can be seen by others: who I am and what I do is like a private, submerged iceberg of moreness, known only to me, and even then, only in part. Through reflecting, rehearsing and witnessing myself in action, I learn about myself and practise myself, if you like, by what Jaspers (1932/1970b) calls ‘inner action’:

I not only draft possibilities of mundane action by inwardly planning them and trying them out, I watch and note my impulses and take affirmative and enhancing, or negative and inhibiting, positions on these impulses. Applying standards that show me what I really ought to be and do, I affect the very first rudiments of my feelings, of my modes of viewing, of my appraisals. I intervene in my inner existence and see myself continuously developing by my own means. (p. 281)

Yes - I apply delimiting values *to myself*, as standards of being in action. Inner action, then, is both an opening and a closing, in this regard. There is a great example of inner action in Carrie’s story 2 ‘*It just falls in*’, in which she said “*you get there, you look at the group... or, I picture the class and me and how we can interact*”. In being imaginatively in action, Carrie is practising inner action. Sure, inner action can be technologized as a technique or exercise which treats the self as an object to be worked on and dealt with. But freely willed, unconditional inner action - such as Carrie’s - comes from the self as “the unconditionality of a believing self-being, *both marked and marking at once* [emphasis added]” (1932/1970b, p. 281), and “this inseparability is the source of inner action. It is the self-creation from which

the real enquiry into myself emerges” (p. 282). *Marked and marking at once, my being and doing are in accord.* This kind of self-marking work echoes the ‘marking out’ delimitation of the design work that Carrie did on the weekend. - Strangely, Carrie actually uses these words herself; she said: “*you’ve this got all this marking and stuff to do, you’ve got to draw the line somewhere*”! An onto-logical parallel is hiding there, perhaps?

The question of what to do becomes a lever of self-understanding. As Jaspers (1932/1970b) says, I come to know myself through decisively working on myself, but I am realised to myself not through cognition but through my actions, inner *and* outer: I gain myself through bearing my truthfulness to myself (pp. 36-38). If I act within a technology of conditional action tied to purposeful ends, I am doomed to an existential futility, trapped in the unceasing passing away of everything, which only makes me grasp for purpose more desperately. By contrast, in “unconditional mundane action” the world is “irradiated from its depths” (p. 257) and its weighty profundity is preserved even in its seeming ordinariness. Yes, Carrie chose to tell me this story for a reason; its significance was already present, on one level.

Where I ‘end up’ through my actions in a way does not really matter. I do not know where I am ‘going’ - and I do not even know how to ask about it, for the most part. In unconditional inner action my self-seeking and self-bearing occurs, as Jaspers says, “without access to the question” (1932/1970b p. 282). But, ironically, perhaps it is also the question that holds open the possibility of working without access to the question?

The undertow

Astrid leads us into the last essential understanding on the inner workings of the question as a phenomenal intimacy of being in learning design, through two important stories. In this first story, Astrid shows us the question as a constant companion to her work:

‘The sneaking suspicion’

I’ve got a lot of stuff going through my mind. I’ve got this sneaking suspicion that is with me all the time that A what I’m teaching and B how I’m teaching it, how I’ve set it up over the last three years, is not the best way of doing it. I have this constant ‘I’m not one hundred percent sure that this is right’. So anytime that I come up with something new, or it

suddenly clicks into place, I go, 'hang on, that's what you need to be doing, and that's the way we need to be doing it'. I'm becoming more confident at responding to that and just putting it in at the last minute. (Astrid, Story 11)

This story shows us learning design within a more expansive temporal frame. The motion, the movement, within this frame is unlike the trajectory we might expect in the orthodox 'continuous improvement' paradigm, even one that is spiral. And, while it does suggest a sustained movement, the primary motion in this story is one of washing in and out. Its momentum, if I can call it that, has the character of *tumbling*, as if the forces of its advancement are both forwards and backwards at once.

This tumbling motion is the play of certainty and uncertainty, but it is uncertainty that seems to be the primary force in the play. Jaspers (1951/2003) would say that it is the enduring fundament of uncertainty that keeps Astrid open to herself and to 'new possibles' (p. 101); and that indeed she might be drawing herself into doubt for the sake of renewing the question of her self-being (p. 124) because after all, not-knowing is the very origin of possibility (1932/1970b, p. 234). But certainty and uncertainty give each to be, and while they do seem to take turns, it is perhaps the enduring interplay of their constant tumbling through the years that seems to bring Astrid into a larger sense of her being in learning design.

In any case, and at any scale, there seems to be a kind of undertow that is counteracting and checking the 'forward' motion of the work – an undertow that is drawing moreness back to its source, perhaps? Yes, there is something about the moody motion of the undertow that communicates a profound returning that accompanies the 'goings on'. *The undertow brings everything back into question*, and it is the undertow that saves Astrid from lapsing into habitual, conditional ways of knowing and acting, that in the long run, bring her into a surer sense of herself in her learning design work. Astrid seems to know this about herself.

However, in the next story Astrid points to the undertow taking the form of a calculative question which draws her into doubt, as if drawn against her will. This kind of doubt is eroding - it 'displaces' her (van Manen, 2007, p. 37) - just like the after-suck of a wave withdrawing into the ocean might undermine the sand under one's feet.

'Flushes'

I will pick an idea up and just have a go at it. For instance at a meeting with [the program] team I went [snaps fingers] I'm gonna do that tomorrow! I've not heard that, I've not seen that, it's new or whatever! And it worked really well! At the time that it's happening, I get these flushes around teaching, I think, this has worked beautifully, I leave going 'that was great' – 'cos I actually really love teaching – and then afterwards, I start to unpack it, and I go hmm, was it great for them? Did it actually work? And then that whole evaluation idea kicks in: how am I actually going to establish that it worked, for anybody other than me?
(Astrid, Story 6)

The wave of teaching energy, arriving as “flushes” around her teaching, moves Astrid effortlessly through the lesson - and then the undertow arrives, in the form of a doubting question. The force of the question here seems negative, as if it destroys her energy. But even here, what on face value seems negative because it not of Astrid's willing, is at a deeper level, profoundly 'giving'. Jaspers' notion of *original motion* (1932/1970b, pp. 228-234) helps us understand this seeming contradiction. In original motion, the self is returned to the self *through the negative*, phenomenally disclosed as not-knowing, dizziness and fear. Writes Jaspers, “it is from a negative, and by the negative, that the [original] motion brings about the positive possibility” (p. 228). The negative, in this sense, is onto-existentially potent because it protects the self from false certainty. In Jasper's philosophy, the turning point in this chthonic saving motion is “the depth I never reach” (p. 229) – the source, not the destination, of one's original self; a self that is revolving, in part, on the churning, turning question. For the educator, the educative self turns and returns on questions of learning.

Remarks in closing – and opening the next...

In this chapter, I have sketched the inner workings of the question as it appears in aspects of the self in situation; in asking and acting; across two planes of being; in its decisively open and closed forms; in the welling-up of possibility, in the looming next; in marking out; in the tumbling undertow; in bringing oneself to bear; and in standing at the brink – all are intimately arising, opening, turning and tumbling in the spaces between being and doing. Yes, in Carrie, Edward and Astrid's self-told stories, the workings of the question are present as a kind of motion.

These intimate workings of the question reveal what is otherwise quite silent in a utilitarian understanding of what is learning design. I have drawn chiefly on the work of Karl

Jaspers to philosophically interpret onto-existential aspects of the question, for Jaspers' thoughts speaks strongly into the deep uncertainties and ontological commitments that are so much part of this learning design kind of work. Now, learning design begins to take its first hesitating steps to stand out as something with moreness. With the fuller character of the question lodged in both the acting, asking self and the willing moreness, learning design emerges, hesitatingly, as a 'figure of freedom' (Fry, 2005) in the educative endeavour.

The well, a throat

The well, a throat, has just one thing to say -
origin, which has no words.
There is no other way for it to be.

As if each summer browned off grasses didn't try
to choke its one round wall.
Or the flaky "Do Not Fall!" and perished grid
that was its lid had not already died.
The well is quiet on things like that,
when I stop by.

I drop in a stone – why?

Seven: A conscience of learning

We have overheard fountains all our days.
They sound to us almost like time.
But much more closely do they keep pace
with eternity's subtle rhythm.

The water is strange and the water is yours,
from here and from far below.
You are the fountain-stone, unawares,
and all things are mirrored in you.

How distant this is, yet deeply akin,
long unriddled and never known,
senseless, then perfectly clear.

Your task is to love what you don't understand.
It grips your most secret emotion, and
rushes away with it. Where?

- Rainer Maria Rilke, *Appendix to The Sonnets to Orpheus, VIII*

Introduction: The unmoving remains

In this chapter I begin afresh with the phenomenon in question and ask again how learning design as such shows itself to be. I turn now to *a conscience of learning* as a second distinguishing essence of the phenomenon of being in learning design. Put side-by-side with the workings of the question, these two aspects show each other's essences in mutual relief: where the question seeks, a conscience already knows; where the question turns in restless motion, so does a conscience remain eternal, unmoving and underlying.

The conscience that gives itself phenomenally as an aspect of being in learning design is a conscience dedicated to learning; 'learning' is its imprimatur and raison d'être. A conscience of learning *knows* learning, without needing to say exactly what learning 'is'. Learning, after all, slips from understanding; it does not stick around to be scrutinised, but

transpires like vapour – sometimes even without ‘being experienced’ at all – and then it is gone again, disappearing into being, as it were. Learning is intimate and private, and it cannot be brought to bear by one being on behalf of another. Learning belongs only to the learner, each to their own, bound up with their own becoming. The educator can chase it, but really, it is only the possibility of learning that is certain – so conscience tells me. No, learning must be gained from learning itself: from its own origin. *The educator’s work, then, is to know that origin in themselves.*

There is much to be looked at, thought about, perhaps understood, insofar as we can, for we are dealing in subtleties and shadows. Nevertheless the ‘evidence’ for a conscience of learning is strong, lodged in the experiences of our academic story-tellers. In this chapter we hear again from Astrid and Carrie, but we also meet for the first time Diane and Beth. Together their stories give us glimpses of this hitherto untold aspect of being a university teacher, and as core to being in learning design.

The educative bond

I begin this chapter by grounding a conscience of learning in the notion of *the educative bond*, meaning that which is personally and intimately compelling and sustaining about one’s involvement in the educative endeavour. At the deepest level, each individual is self-anchored by their own want to somehow “do and be what we can” (Jaspers, 1938/1971, p. 93), and while this existential bond imbues every part of our lives, in our context, it lives and is lived educatively. What I mean by the ‘bond’ is not a contract to be upheld, but a way of being involved in the educative endeavour that is meaningful, and in which I feel beholden for my own sake, and for the sake of others, to bring my will and my actions in one accord. Why? Because, explains Jaspers, “I want to be so that this will and this action are mine” (1932/1970a, p. 55).

I say to myself, deep down in my bones: *I want, in my educative work, to bring myself to bear, to give, to touch others, to be real with myself and real with others; I want to learn about myself and the world through my work; I want to be challenged and I want to feel, at the end of the day, a sense of accomplishment. I want to fully occupy, if you like, the existential address: to make myself at home in this work. I want to be intimately involved with how education can ‘be’; to exercise my learning design as a figure of freedom.* I can speak of my

own bond. But is it the same for you? How can what is individual and intimate be spoken so that we might share a sense of it? Perhaps as David Denton does, in his essay *That Mode of Being Called Teaching* (1974), with words beautiful enough to speak directly to the heart:

I called, from the mysterious depths of my being, on the world, and the world called on me to be. ...that call, and my response to it in choice, constitute a hole of possibility, a hole bounded by the arc of my intentionality, a hole both bright and mysterious. (p. 114)

While spoken in the register of lived experience rather than poetry, nevertheless I believe we can and do all hear that same call and see that same bright bounded hole in the whispered intimacies of one another's experiences.

In this first story from Diane, who teaches into a Master of Education program, we can recognise this bond – which for Diane finds expression as unbridled enthusiasm:

'The invitation'

About three or four years ago I had an idea at a program meeting. The program coordinator said 'I just want you to think about something for a while. How can we make what we are doing more in line with the philosophy of the program?' He just tossed it out there. In light of considering his question I went away and I thought about it; I thought 'ooh, what could I do... hey!'. If he hadn't asked the question, I don't think I would have thought of doing it. I don't know what the time lag was between when he said 'how can we?' and I came up with this idea. I don't think it was the same day... it was at least a few days, perhaps... there was a little bit of a time break... but at whatever point that I just stopped to think about it, I just realised one day that I had an idea. I got a really big picture that's like - 'that's what it is. That's what we're aiming for'. (Diane, Story 14)

The call in this story is an invitation to design, posed as a question. It is a call which Diane enthusiastically accepts by immediately making it her own: "*I thought 'ooh, what could I do'.*" Diane meets the question 'unquestioningly', with the full force of her being, as if she were waiting to be challenged, already open and ready for a profounder engagement – she sees a chance, perhaps, for existential self-reclamation? Polanyi (1958/1974) would agree. His own existential affirmation declares: "I accept these accidents of personal existence as the concrete opportunities for exercising our personal responsibility. *This acceptance is the sense of my calling*" (p. 322). In Polanyi's philosophy, the call is for both work and one's self-being. The two are the same, because we do not make our choices in a vacuum but are obliged to

exercise our personal commitments as a kind of 'existential service' (1958/1974, p. 318). There is a correlation, he explains, between our sense of being called, our personal responsibility, and our freedom to choose, occurring together within an 'ontology of commitment' (p. 379). Here, Polanyi describes a 'binding' within that framework, which can be heard as a voice of one's own -

the voice by which he commands himself to satisfy his intellectual standards. Its commands harness his powers to the exercise of his responsibilities. It binds him to abiding purposes, and grants him power and freedom to defend them. (p. 380)

It is possible to see this ontology of commitment at work in Diane's acceptance of the educative challenge 'tossed' her way: the calling, the responsibility and her freedom to choose are inseparably bound; each is present in all.

Let us zoom on the phenomenon of the call. We can ask, what or who is this voice that calls? Is the voice, as some philosophers hold, that of an 'other' of one's own? (see chiefly Emmanuel Levinas (1905–1995) and Martin Buber (1878–1965)). Heidegger (1927/2010) names this voice 'the call of conscience' (p. 259). In the Heideggerian conscience-call, the caller is alien, uncanny – an 'other' that calls Dasein, the being "which I myself am" (p. 112), back to itself. It is the self that calls the self, for "at bottom conscience is, in its essence, *in each instance mine*" (p. 267). Polanyi (1958/1974) unabashedly calls the voice our more judicious 'higher self' (p. 318). For Jaspers (1932/1970b), it is the 'unconditional' self that calls; a self that, in a strange reversal, rather than speaking to me as if it were responsible for me, when I hear its voice, it strikes me as the being *for which I am responsible* (p. 224). This voice, then – is it my possible Existenz, which is more than my present awareness of self, speaking to "my mere empirical existence" (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 55)? In this inversion I become aware of my self-being not as listener *but as caller*, and I obtain a new transcendent perspective of myself; I recognise myself as unconditional, unlimited - as Diane does, when she takes on the invitational call as her own. Yes, the voice seems to be coming from within me, yet is more than me, sustaining me "by that which in myself is not only myself" (p. 55). Like some existential hum that we are privy to, "it is the constant, substantial undertone that can be faintly but always decisively heard in our feelings"; an undertone, moreover, that "underlies the silent, dependable bonds" (1932/1970b, p. 223-224). Marion (2016) goes further, collapsing call, caller and called to one, and directs our philosophical attention to the

claim itself - an “unconceivable, unnameable, unpredictable agency” (Marion, 1988, p. 179). The willingness itself, which I become one with, when I call myself this way, perhaps?

Whenever and however it arrives, the call is undeniable; it is an imperative of the self (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 55). The call is ‘undeniable’, because to say that I have been called is to admit the call in the first place (Marion, 2002, p. 288). It is undeniable that Diane was called, because she took the invitation upon herself *as* a call: she responded as if called. Marion explains that in this way, it is not the call that shows the call to be, but the response (p. 285). If Diane had not responded, there would not have been a call – just a question put to the group. Contrary to Polanyi’s ontology of commitment, then, which includes choice in its triptych, Marion’s call cannot be refused - there is no choice in it, you see. By the time it is heard it is already too late. But how can this be understood? It is something to do with the unexpectedness of the call, for its signature is ‘surprise’, and it is the surprise itself that summons me and claims me (1988, p. 180), says Marion. It works this way because in the event of being surprised, I am suddenly without my usual subjectivities and ecstatic self-dispossession. Diane’s story of the invitation to design shows us how, in the moment of being called, we are dispossessed of a performance of being – for a moment at least, the occupation of teaching is synonymous with the occupation of the self. Yes, ironically, in being claimed and coming to be “without ground”, I possess myself entirely (Marion, 1988, p. 179).

Called to herself by the surprise question, Diane comes into a mode of self-possession. But what, then, is given, in this return? Heidegger (1927/2010) says that conscience, the call, discloses ‘something’ to understanding, and what that something is “one’s own self” (p. 262). Marion (2002) takes another approach; in his phenomenology, the call is unconditional: I might not know for what I am called, but in the surprise of the call I become “open to an empty gap” (p. 268). But are they substantively one, these perspectives - can we say that the self is revealed as the empty gap? Might this openness, this emptiness be the “hole both bright and mysterious” (p. 114) that Denton (1974) described?

Renewal ‘at origin’

In the event of being called, there is renewal – an inbreath. Can you *hear* Diane inhaling fresh air when she says “*ooh, what could I do?*”? A space within is opened, where newness might pour in; where something might begin (Heidegger, 1954/1971, p. 154). At this

turning point between spaciousness and newness, Diane does not rush ahead, but waits, holding herself open for a while – “*there was a little bit of a time break*”. It is as if she has taken the emptiness into herself and sustained it as a kind of stillness, holding in gestation an “inner emptiness” (Bhaskar, 2016, p. 166). Then, when she turned to look, she “*just realised*” she had an idea. The germ of her work seems to be phenomenal rather than constructed; like an artist at work, Diane’s learning design “gives up its visibility” (Marion, 2003, p. 103) to her. Or - could it be that in committing herself so unconditionally Diane gives herself up into the care of the educative bond - and lets its breath renew *her*, as it were?

If this sounds like a work of inspired imagination, then maybe it is. Jaspers (1932/1970b) tells us that imagination is a mode of absolute consciousness which is “its own source, not to be understood by way of something else”, and the way our consciousness “brings forth the mode of making sure that we are” (p. 223). Absolute consciousness “enters the ground of my being wherever I *really am*”, he explains, and when it enters, it “opens the eye that sees being... it seizes upon deeper truth”, where

The contents of imagination stand forth with an original certainty that is its own measure.

There is no testing it by reasons or by ends. If I make imagination a means, I deprive it of its being. The being that justifies my existence lies in imagination, not the other way round. (p. 246)

Yes, without imagination, there is no being - being is only ever *possible* Existenz, after all. The “*really big picture*” in Diane’s imagination, by this interpretation, comes from a place of unlimitedness, where being and idea alike rest freely, unreservedly and unconditionally in their vast moreness. Perhaps this is why the picture appears to Diane as “*really big*”. Now I come to think on it, ideas always arrive ‘big’ – they may not be distinctly formed, but they always fill my field of inner awareness to the edges. Is this a glimpse of the intimate immensity that Bachelard spoke of in its guise as the ironic unbounded freedom of the educative bond? Or the ‘imago’ phenomenon that Davies and Talbot (1987) found to be true of designing, which comes as if fulfilling itself?

What do I mean, though, when I say ‘comes from a place of unlimitedness’? We approach the notion of origin. In a Jasperian way of thinking, origin, explains Miron (2014), is not a beginning that gives rise, but a pivot-point, because at this foundation, self perceives itself directly - *one is origin to oneself* (p. 5). Here, we meet ourselves in what Jaspers

(1932/1970b) calls “original being”, a state in which I am aware of “the unsurveyable substance... the original necessity of my intrinsic self” (p. 158). I must arrive at the very the limits of my imagination if to stand on this self-turning point, the groundless ground of being! But origin is not wholly unthinkable, either. Here, Blackham (1952) elegantly explains Jaspers’ notion of original self as the ‘given’ self:

Beyond my first conscious decisions by which I constitute myself at the level of being-oneself, is an original self obscure in origin but definite in actuality, [an] original self I cannot choose *because it is given* [emphasis added], but I can assume it, adopt it as mine, as me. (p. 49)

Yes, the gifts of origin are already given and are always being given. Do I accept the call of self to self? It is already mine. The tug of the bond, given as a conscience-call, reminds me of this deeply constant givenness that underlies the comings and goings of mundane existence. But these glimpses of constancy are not action: it is *staying with* the constancy of origin that ripens its gifts in lived reality. When I stay involved, I give what is possible a chance to flesh itself out into being, ‘fulfilling’ its reality (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 247). This makes sense when you think about how many ideas perish the moment the excitement of their discovery is over. It is a commitment to the possible that gives possibility its substance, that binds and rebinds origin to expressive life. The quality and content of my attention might come and go, and the situation itself will shift, but my commitment to that which is moving me remains unmoved, as if it is falling (back) into step with origin.

I now introduce Beth, whose story about being in learning design shows this movement of returning and renewal occurring over and over, not out of need, but out of a vital involvement with origin.

‘Year after year’

There is a course I have been teaching for four years, every Tuesday night. Some of the literature and the frameworks are the same, but I spend the same amount of time on the workshop as I did last year and the year before. You’d think that I’ve got it there! I ask myself ‘really? do you have go through the whole thing again?’ Yes, I do, because I’m rehearsing it, I’ve got new stories, I add new slides, I change the graphics. Plus, they’re new people. After the first workshop I go ‘ah, so-and-so’s got this experience or that experience: I need to bring in this or that’. (Beth, Story 4)

Beth's story seems to show that one cannot help but return to base - even when a lesson is perfectly serviceable 'as is'. But why return again and again to the same point, year after year? Could it be because being in learning design is not really about producing something serviceable, but is a work of the self? *That* that kind of work is never 'done', because the return itself renews and reinvigorates. With this understanding, the labour of returning is the constant and necessary work of renewing meaningfulness 'at origin' through the intimate rituals and rhythms of our work. We do not have to seek meaningfulness in the extraordinary; indeed Jaspers (1951/2003) points out that it is through the ordinary daily repetitions of our living that we stand to "gain in depth" (p. 120).

Spi-ritual returns.

What remains seemingly the same on the surface of it, like the repeated lesson in Beth's story, is contentiously reconfirmed, and thus "permeated by a mood arising from our conscious participation in meaning" (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 120). Such a mood, embodied by the teacher, surely strengthens the possibility of learning in the classroom. Yes, strangely, ironically, these returns to origin re-new rather than remember meaningfulness. It is as if by returning we cut forgetfulness and empty habits of performance off at the root, so that our most ordinary work might shoot again with new life.

An inner order

A conscience of learning compels us to confirm with our being the possibility of learning – to check the pulse of the design 'under the skin' of it, as it were. We are feeling, at depth, for *strength*. Beth's next story opens the muscular fabric of an 'inner order' in the work of learning design:

'Inheritors of the curriculum'

I inherited this subject and I just went with what was already there. This particular subject delves into history, and I've never really liked history. It wasn't particularly delightful. The subject was dead, for me. Then after I taught it for a couple of years I came across this term 'inheritors of the curriculum'. Well that's when it went 'Ahhhh! I don't have to feel so responsible for teaching this history like this. I'll give you the information, but it's yours then, as a gift'. And that's where I felt the design opening up. It was like all this kind of stuff lifted, the weight of teaching something I didn't really enjoy myself, but I suddenly saw the

joy in the way you offer it.. it can be a tasting plate, if you like, eaten any way you like. This idea of inheritors of the curriculum just blew my mind, it was an opening up in my own mind. I thought 'I need to open – this is what I need here in this subject'.

Then what I did was, I told them that they were inheritors of the curriculum. I did a whole piece about it. So I shared the design piece with them, and it became 'this is what I'm doing, so you can toss it, you can do whatever else'. But I talked a little bit about what it means, because everybody gets that idea of inheritance. I go through that on the first day. And it feels right, and you can see them going like this (nods her head). The first time I did it, a couple of sessions later they started to use the language! The second time I did it, I told a story about this book that my dad got from the dump. My dad used to visit the dump and just bring anything back from the dump that he thought was important for us to have. Anyway he brought this big book home. I don't have it, my sister got it when they moved house. But I got a similar picture of it and I told that story to the class so they could get the feeling of what I was trying to do in the design of this topic.

So now, I love the subject! The content's the same but no way is the engagement with the literature the same. I ask them to do different things to it. Then, as I've gone on, now I do different things with the same material – I just keep offering it. And you know what, even though that's an important idea, I haven't said it in any other topic. Because the life's already there, maybe? (Beth, Story 8)

In this strong story, we learn about strength. The story is exquisite, reverberating with internal sympathies. Hear the poetry of the echo between "*inherit[ing] this subject*" that Beth is teaching, and the "*inheritors of the curriculum*" idea that brought the subject to life for teacher and students alike. Moreover, the history curriculum is the perfect setting for this inheritance-themed 'design piece', as Beth calls it. The harmonic between subject matter, the situation of its being taught, and the way of teaching fairly rings with life. We can see this same phenomenon of resonances in another part of the story, too, when Beth says "*I thought 'I need to open – this is what I need here in this subject'*", in which opening the curriculum for possible learning is synonymous with opening oneself. (I have noticed this phenomenon of resonances in other stories too, and I have come to think of it as the 'onto-logical parallel': an agreement between the ontic and ontological elements in the experience, manifested through the figurative language of the story itself. The onto-logical parallel *literally* speaks the substantive 'and'... it is a mysterious mutuality, that while at root may be unsayable, is nevertheless not unreadable on the surface of its lived expression.) In any case, there seems

to be a meaningful involvement between the parts of the design work – self, idea, expression – that suggests a kind of *inner order* between the parts and binds them as one. It is an order that, like our daily routines, can sustain and nourish us with meaningfulness - as long as it does not become fixed (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 120-122). In other words, an order of the onto-existential kind must be an order that is *chosen*. It is by a conscience of learning, sensitive to this inner order, that I discriminate in my educative work between life-giving order and choking structure.

Perhaps the open-endedness of educative work requires some kind of an inner order to bind it all together – and perhaps this internal binding is the ‘figuring’ work of design, as such? Such a binding would constitute the work with a signature of its own (it becomes a “*design piece*”), preserving at the same time the design’s unique underlying form, and its free ‘unbounded’ expression in the situated event of teaching (as Beth says, “*I do different things with the same material – I just keep offering it*”). The design piece, then, is a ‘thing’ that has settled into a being of its own, with a meaningfulness of its own that can be said, seen, and worked with, both ‘at origin’ as that which has givenness to spare, and ‘at surface’, in within the limits of its situated and lived expressions. We can easily recognise this expressiveness as ‘delivering’ teaching - a term that, when understood etymologically for its original meaning as ‘setting free’, seems to describe perfectly the action of the design’s givenness set free ‘at surface’. Perhaps the form of the design piece carries its freedom *in* its very order?

Heidegger (1935-36/2002b) would call the design piece ‘a work’, meaning that which installs within its structure a ‘free space’ which “holds open the open of a world” (p. 23). And a space, as Heidegger explains elsewhere (1954/1971), “is something ...from which something *begins its presencing*” (p. 154); it is both origin and at the same time, indicates beyond itself (Miron, 2012, p. 106). Yes, a space is origin and moreness in one. In the vein of the Vedic aphorism *from fullness only fully comes*, might we also hold that *from moreness only moreness comes*? The work of a design piece, as a space that contains *and* conveys freedom, works not as means for ends, but for that which is unending - learning, perhaps?

The authority of love

A work of learning design, understood as a space, does not and cannot be delivered of educational content in its expression. It has nothing except its own spacious moreness to give,

and as such, surely perfectly characterises a mood of ‘possible learning’. But given as freedom, the design piece’s landing in human experience ‘as learning’ cannot be calculated, managed, or demonstrated. So, how is it delivered? Beth tells us it is “*offered*” - perfect! Beth: “*this is what I’m doing, so you can toss it, you can do whatever else*”; the inheritors of the curriculum idea is given freely and unconditionally as a starting place, a free space for others’ possible learning. As a teacher I can exemplify an educational stewardship – that is, a committed “taking care of something on behalf of another” (Gillespie, 2003, p. 147) - but as a teacher I cannot in all conscience ‘fill’ this free space, as if it were my own. Learning can really only be ‘claimed’ by the one who is learning (Jaspers, 1957a, p. 94). And, as Bhaskar (2016) plainly puts it: “at the end of the day it is you who have to get it” (p. 166). That is why the design can only be offered. Nevertheless, the students seem receptive: they nod, they adopt the language. Perhaps in being freely offered, the design, as a work of free space, is freely accepted, too?

With design, one can only go so far before it is not ours at all. Certainly there is sense in which the design, in its being set free ‘at surface’ and freely given as a space for others “goes beyond itself”, as phenomenologist Anthony Steinbock says (2003, p. 318). Accordingly, we might conceive a learning design within Steinbock’s ‘generative’ phenomenological frame, for learning shares characteristics with generativity: both refuse closure and exhaust their own meaning-structures. Even a strong design cannot assure the occurrence of ‘learning’ – and a conscience of learning reminds us of this. No doubt Beth would abandon the idea of ‘inheriting the curriculum’ if it lost its fertility and liveliness for others’ possible learning, or indeed for herself. Perhaps learning, like sleep, birth and death, is another instance of what Steinbock calls ‘limit-phenomena’, phenomena that are “given as not being able to be given” (p. 290). Yet while ‘learning’ itself cannot be given, its *possibility* cannot be taken away.

But there is something ‘more’ than mere possibility, mere spaciousness in learning’s promise: something deep and substantial that turns a soul, driving involvement; something for which the risk of offering and accepting is worthwhile. Beth’s struggle was for something that would bring life to what was dead. I would hardly dare to say what this ‘something’ is, if Beth had not herself unequivocally declared it when she said “*now, I love the subject!*”, and indeed as Astrid did when she said “*I actually really love teaching*” in the ‘Flushes’ story in the previous chapter. Yes, while conscience might be the “supreme authority at the turning-

point” (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 241), it is not conscience itself that ‘fulfils’ us. For that, says Jaspers, “we depend upon another source” (p. 241), and that source is - *love*. Love is the foundation in which I am grounded (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 62), and it is only through love I can perceive what ‘authentically is’, for love guides me to choose that “with which I myself am identical” (p. 56). Conscience is inseparable from love, explains Jaspers (1932/1970b, p. 241), and remains ‘aimless’ without it (p. 241). So too for Jaspers, education is inseparable from love (Horn, 1993, p. 5). Why not? Love, as Bhaskar (2012) says, is “the great expanding, developing and empowering force in the universe” (p. 190) – and such a force must share some common ground with learning! Surely at heart it is love that is given in the event of teaching, too; an ‘educational love’ for the content of one’s teaching passed from teacher to student, “so that they can fall in love too, be changed by it, start caring for it, but also begin anew with it” (Vlieghe & Zamojski, 2019, p. 36). And this love is exactly what Beth has found and passed on with her exemplary ‘inheritors of the curriculum’ design piece, is it not?

Perhaps a work of learning design such as the ‘inheritors of the curriculum’ design piece can carry and convey a conscience of learning *in its very form*. But even when our teaching work is vague and difficult and love seems far from sight, we know by this same silently speaking conscience that the substance of the educative endeavour remains somehow true, and indeed is so lodged in us that there is nothing to ‘prove’ at surface, for deep down, we *know* that moreness remains at large, and as long as it does, learning is still possible.

A lived and living design

When we think of learning design as the observable, measurable structural elements of our teaching, we discount the roots of the design that are lodged in love, conscience, bond, origin, order. But even beyond the binary of base-and-surface there is a next order of understanding in which what is *really* going on is ‘life’. Yes, a lived and living reality of being in learning design accepts and indeed thrives on the moods, situations, liaisons and disparities of teaching and learning - because this liveliness is none other than *ourselves*, and because it brings us before ourselves in action. At times there is a struggle in the play between this ‘being in learning design’ and the ‘design piece’. This is what Astrid points to in our next story.

'Overcoming the design'

When I'm comfortable with the group and there's a really good rapport, I'm quite open to telling them, this isn't working for you is it, this is falling flat, come on, let's just do it anyway, let's get through it! So I use my relationship with them to overcome design elements that haven't worked. This week in particular has been quite fluid. I did have the really careful structure around it - I do every week - but I've mixed it up this week more than usual. (Astrid, Story 9)

Educators everywhere would recognise the situation of "*falling flat*", where one's educative hope falls fatally short of itself. But this lifelessness is also part of life, is it not, where the lived reality of being in education, for students and teachers alike, is that we are at times tired and overwhelmed. Sometimes, the work of it is just getting "*through it*", as Astrid says; through to some free space on the other side of this stultifying lifelessness.

When Astrid says she must "*overcome*" parts of the design, it is as if the design is getting in the way of possible learning. But how can this be understood? Through Astrid's story we can see that the ordered structure of a design, left unchecked by a conscience of learning, can strangle possible learning through a fixedness to itself that has exhausted its original intention. There are two ideas from Heidegger that might help to understand this. The first is enframing [*Gestell*] (Heidegger, 1954/1977, pp. 19-21), in which, as Hodge (2015) elegantly explains, things are 'set upon us' and revealed as this and that, while *the revealing itself stays hidden* (p. 39). Hodge makes the point that enframements, left untroubled, are easily propagated through structures such as education systems. When a learning design does not obey the deeper authority of love, conscience, bond, origin, and inner order, but instead becomes an authority in its own right, it has lost itself as a figure of freedom, and exerts a kind of enframing on the educative situation. The lesson, executed as planned, for example, seems lose its question, and learning cannot breathe without the lungs of the question at work in its folds. If we want the original meaningfulness of the design to be honoured, it must be held and given loosely. So too with Beth: if she had *forced* the idea of 'inheritors of the curriculum' upon the students rather than 'offering' it, no doubt its original liveliness would have been lost - or worse, become a violence.

Astrid, as she said, uses her relationship with the students to save possible learning from disappearing underneath design. But how? Simply, by being herself and being sincere.

Like Beth did, Astrid kept possible learning open by *declaring and revealing the design itself*, together with the content of what she was offering. Perhaps we could say they disenframed design 'at surface' and so protected design's freedom? Isn't this what a conscience of learning would bid us do? Yes, teachers are disposed to be wise to enframements, and to resist them - they "nurture the saving power" of enframement's alternatives (Hodge, 2015, p. 37) even though they might not know what the alternative is – there is just a sense that *something* must be protected. Perhaps the "*really careful structure*" that Astrid speaks of is also the very thing that must be protected against in a lived and living design – so in a sense, a design must protect against itself? What saves a design from an enframing self-authority is the deeper authority of a conscience of learning; an inner vigilance against enframement itself, as suggested by this comment by Carrie at one point in our conversation: "*my designs are more than purposefully open – they are purposefully avoiding being shut. If that makes sense*". Yes, I think I can understand this now, Carrie: you are protecting the pedagogical potential of you-know-not-what against enframement?

The other Heideggerian notion that helps us understand why a design might need to be 'overcome' is 'representing' (Heidegger, 1954/1977b). In representing, the original presencing of a thing (given 'at origin') is fixed so firmly that it obscures its originality and becomes instead a different thing: it becomes a thought representation only. Where enframement 'sets upon', and so obscures what was originally given, representing 'sets in place' a new thing over against what was originally given and securing it calculatively. Heidegger writes:

This making secure must be a calculating, for calculability alone guarantees being certain in advance, and firmly and constantly, of that which is to be represented... Representing is no longer a self-unconcealing for... but is a laying hold and grasping of What presences does not hold sway, but rather assault rules. ... That which is, is no longer that which presences; it is rather that which, in representing, is first set over against, that which stands fixedly over against. (p. 149-150)

Calculative representing captures perfectly a conventional performance-and-production understanding of learning design, where, as a framework for learning, its entire *raison d'être* is to 'set in place'. But this orientation is not what is being revealed in these stores of lived experience. No, here, we see a learning design that is alive; fixedness asphyxiates it. In a lived

and living design, the educator stays involved with the design; they are 'in' it, moving with it, and as such continues to freely express the educative bond. Without the educator's lived, 'delivering' involvement, representing creeps in and the liveliness of the original idea entropies. Astrid knows this, and protects the lively integrity of her design through 'mixing it up' each time she teaches it, as she says.

Now Astrid, obeying the authority of a conscience of learning in the event of the class, is pressed to find a passage through the deadness, a 'way' to somehow make good on that educative bond. A rescue is needed. To save the possibility of learning from its own demise, Astrid draws on what is most living of all - and that is her own self-being. Now, where design threatened to stand in front of being and possible learning, being comes to stand in front of design. What is the way that Astrid finds? As Astrid herself says, it is to "*open*": in opening up about what is going on in the situation, she destroys both the enframement and the representing in one move. In its place she offers only openness itself. Perhaps we can say that by betraying the artifice of the design, she preserves the sincerity of the design. Yes, it is sincerity, the communicative and earnest friend of conscience, that saves the possibility of learning in this situation.

But one more gift is given in this humble act. By sincerely exposing the troublesomeness of the design Astrid makes visible at surface a conscience of learning to others. Yes, in opening completely, Astrid gives to the students *the conscience of learning itself*. More precisely, it is as if she has cleared the way for a conscience of learning to give itself, directly. Perhaps this is the real gift an educator might extend toward another human being: through their designs, through overcoming their designs, or through communicating their designs, the educator is in a position to show the common authority of a conscience of learning as that which belongs to us all.

Holding open for the struggle

At the centre of this next story is a conscience of learning shared between a group of teachers; a conscience which their learning design holds in trust.

'The way we are and the way we work'

In all the planning meetings that we had prior to the course starting, we spoke about flexibility all the time. We all had had experience working with another course and another coordinator who was not flexible, and didn't provide the foundation material for us to work from. So we all experienced, I guess, working blind a lot, where you were given stuff and it's really poorly put together, and you go 'how am I supposed to teach this?'. When we were given the opportunity to write this course, the three of us, we thought 'yay!' (laughs). We can make sure it's a good solid foundation. We also built in the flexibility, and we actually said it quite a few times in our meetings, 'of course this is the PowerPoint, but...'. We know 'yeah, I know you will do it differently to me'. So there was almost that permission always, and we were reminded of that, we reminded each other of that, always. Even at the meeting we had recently at the start of the semester we reminded ourselves of that as well. It wasn't intentional, it's just I guess the way we are and the way we work.

When I was doing this [design work] stuff on Saturday, I was very conscious of not saying 'do this, now say this, and do this next...'. I was really conscious of not being too prescriptive in the outline – because that's all it is, it's an outline. Basically, these are some suggestions of what you can do, but if you want to do it different... It's not written in, but we all know that if you want to do it differently, you can. We all know that if something happens, and you think, that's a better way, we could maybe do it this way today... then we share that afterwards. (Carrie, Story 7)

This story seems to show that a conscience of learning somehow belongs between beings. Why not? Etymologically broken down, the word 'con-science' means a shared knowing ("con" means "with"). But a conscience is not exactly this. According to Jaspers (1932/1970b), a conscience is original to each individual, an intimately personal standard, timeless and eternal for oneself alone, yet 'what' it shows is "a universal being I can forever affirm" (p. 235). In other words, a conscience is a standard that I hold as applying to human being 'in general', which therefore also applies to me; and a conscience is mine alone, because only I can accept responsibility for it. Elegantly, Jaspers' subtly seems to prove the universal in the personal.

In the educative endeavour, one's private conscience is lived out in the public arena of teaching. Yes, there is compromise at every turn, but conscience itself does not decay. Conscience tries to find a way to be realised in action, to come out of rarefied possible Existenz into a 'lived' everyday existence. But as Jaspers (1932/1970b) points out, to simply declare the authority of one's conscience as justification for action (to say "just because my

conscience says so”), is to establish one’s authority over other beings (p. 237): it is an act of arrogance. He adds too that a declared conscience is also lazy, because it robs us of the opportunity to struggle for a ‘lived’ conscience, realised in action. Thus the struggle not just in ourselves, but with others, too, in genuine communication around what is true, right, good - to struggle together as possible Existenz communicating with other possible Existenz. Jaspers calls this genuine, existential mode of communication *the loving struggle* (p. 59-66). When we negotiate our individual consciences of learning in the workplace, we contentiously play this struggle out. We struggle with and for the students too: indeed, it is for their sake, and on their behalf, that we struggle at all.

By working together around a shared endeavour, Carrie and her colleagues are relating as Jaspers (1932/1970b) calls a ‘community of activity’, an ‘existential circle’ of souls tied together by tasks of daily invention and production (pp. 361-371); by “*the way we are and the way we work*”, as Carrie pointedly says. Here, the being and the doing are one and the same. The design work is that which acts to binds this existential circle, manifested in the creative shaping of the course, in its preservation as a “*solid foundation*”, in the design’s expression in the event of teaching, and in its renewal at origin when, as Carrie says, “*we share that afterwards*”. What is called ‘the design’ is mutual but mutable, held between this group of teachers as that which faithfully vouchsafes and embodies, if you like, their shared conscience of learning, earned and confirmed again and again through their ongoing loving struggle.

What is gained, in this community of activity, is not just the coming to be of an idea, but the coming to be of one another: it is a struggle for being, for possible Existenz, for *meaningfulness* in “*the way we are*”. Being in design together, then, for this group at least, is a way to hold open; not to impose a conscience of learning, but to hold open a space within which a conscience might find its own purchase. In attending conscientiously to the “*the way we work*” Carrie and her colleagues created a ‘work’ of design that exemplified their struggle. Carrie did not say ‘what’ the design was about - but do you get the feeling that it would have been something wonderful? Surely the design, as a thing held loosely and lovingly between them, carries in the open weave of its fabric the silent traces of their sacred struggle; it *freely* carries their love into action – for themselves, for each other, and for others to come. Yes, as Jaspers (1951/2003) contends, it is the struggle that gives freedom into our experience, for

“there is no isolated freedom. Where there is freedom it struggles with unfreedom, and if unfreedom were fully overcome through the elimination of all resistances freedom itself would cease” (p. 115).

Remarks in closing – and opening the next...

The authority of a conscience of learning holds each of us to its own silent standard. Indeed, we rely on a conscience of learning, for how else might we find our way in the educative endeavour? Like Gert Biesta (2004) says, the educative responsibility is unlimited and incalculable, “a responsibility without knowledge” (p. 63). A conscience of learning *knows* that learning is possible even while its manifest eludes us, immeasurable to our instruments, disappearing into being at the point of its arrival. While it might not be possible to give learning, it is possible to give a conscience of learning - overtly or unwittingly - through our teaching, that others might find their own consciences of learning.

Personally, surfacing and naming a conscience of learning as an intimacy of being in learning design has given me a philosophical handle for my own lived experience, and a way to understand what might be going on when I feel compromised in my work. I recognise its silent and earnest presence in my work, and I can see it in the stories shared by academics, both in these pages, and in my daily conversations. I can see that a conscience of learning is both lived and living: it reminds, renews and returns us to the educative bond that underlies the work of being a teacher in higher education; it provides an inner order to its expressive delivery; it turns on love, struggles for itself in our work, and finds its truth in negotiation, action, and commitment. But the stories also show me that if a work of design gets in the way of possible learning, it can be decisively overcome by being declared. I can see that a conscience of learning is vouchsafed not in the fixed structure of a design but in one’s own tenderly ordered meaningfulness; and I can see that this meaningfulness must be constantly regained by each of us ‘at origin’, even in a shared endeavour.

And I am curious about how my newfound awareness of a conscience of learning plays into my work. I ask - does it make a difference to my work whether I am consciously aware of my educative bond and my conscience of learning? Left to myself, I would naturally go “with the grain” of my academic conscience, as David Watson (2003, p. xi) so perfectly puts it. But the university as a workplace is not like that – it is a place of struggle. I am thinking I should

bless this struggle, for my bond and its conscience, otherwise silent and constant like my own breath, comes into my awareness only when it labours in me. Yes, it is the struggle for my conscience in my work that shows me what I dare not lose: what is truly, existentially meaningful in the educative endeavour.

The bond is safe with me, for I struggle daily.

A conscience of learning may not be something that we can easily say, yet it can be carried in the question like a force for good. We can be like Eugene Rice who decades ago provoked it when he asked “it is time we raise the questions of meaning. Why did we choose this profession in the first place?” (1984, p. 5). The question is more pertinent now than it ever was – and the notion of a conscience of learning seems like an apt reply.

The holy

cannot be anticipated cannot be persuaded

cannot be manifested cannot be imitated

cannot be earned cannot be understood

cannot be refused cannot be borne -

without my skin, it all goes in.

Eight: The forces of learning

For the most part we only allow outlying and transient circumstances to make our occasions. They are, in fact, the cause of our distraction. Nearest to all things is that power which fashions their being. *Next* to us the grandest laws are continually being executed.

- Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Introduction: Forces tumble in

Now comes a further turn, but not the last. I did not mean to write this chapter, but I should not have been surprised that something ‘more’ would come through this concert of attention; something strong, something *forceful*. But of course – this ‘moreness’ that has been accompanying me is just that: it does not ‘have’ force - it *is* forces; specifically, it is the phenomenal *forces of learning*. Oh, I was resistant at first; I tried to reason that these forces were not illuminating ‘learning design’ as such, but rather, were phenomena of ‘learning’ itself, and this was another thesis altogether! But the forces of learning changed my mind, as they do – for how can learning design ‘be’ without learning? Was I not already *learning* the phenomenon of being in learning design, as it were, through my research? Each stuck moment and each breakthrough of phenomenal insight *was* learning executing itself through my understanding, as if by its own wilful way, and in the manner of itself.

I admit, then, that these forces are as intimate to learning design as the inner workings of the question and a conscience of learning are. Learning design needs to somehow have its own way of knowing what is learning and what ‘gives’ learning. University teachers may not be experts in the discipline of education; they may not have theories of learning that underpin their choices; they may not know what to do at all! – but here, *exactly*, lies the power of a naïve and ‘original’ feel for learning. Yes, since we cannot ‘know’ what is learning, we must feel our way in the dark, guided by learning’s existential traces on our senses. Now, it is time to look the forces of learning in the eye, through the stories of those that are involved with them on a daily basis, the university educators.

But first, a word on forces

I have staked it all to write of forces. The word 'forces' evokes a mystical cosmos energetic with its own intimate powers and laws; a universe animate with natural and unnatural psychical, physical, and metaphysical origins and fates. No, it is not fashionable to be serious about forces any more. As innate properties, affinities or principles of an internal order, forces are 'old science'. We speak now – ironically, more weakly! - of 'interactions' (Wilczek, 2015, p. 362). But have forces themselves disappeared as such? I ask – do forces possess ontic existence, or are they a concept only, a human invention? Thomas Kuhn (1962/2012) says no, concepts “rarely require invention because they are already at hand” (p. 142). Yes, a concept like forces, though it may have fallen out of scientific favour, is still phenomenally at hand.

But now I am pulled up by a further problem with this idea of forces, because forces also evoke notions of influence and causal relations - notions usually eschewed in phenomenology (Giles, 2008; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2005). Even so, in phenomenological parlance, are we not happy to speak of being drawn, of being called? While these phenomena are meant ontologically, we can hardly do without the language of forces to say what we mean by them. Besides, I have already laid the ground for a phenomenological engagement with forces by pointing to what is undeniable, welling up, pouring-forth, and so forth. Yes, perhaps rather than being distracted by forces' influences, we can stay phenomenally and ontologically closer by wondering at forces' sheer and utter *givenness* - for it is like 'force' conveys itself forcefully, and is of-and-to itself, not to, from or for anything else. Moreover, when the word forces is traced to its roots, we find forces to be about *strength*, which I have suggested previously is a marker of phenomenal quality. In any case, in phenomenological terms, if forces appear to be 'something', and they are strong, and have moreness, and they draw me into their wake - are they not phenomenally 'so'? In the end, it is not mine to say whether forces are 'real', but I can say that phenomenologically, there 'really' seems to be something going on here; and that there are, by the least account, *seeming* forces.

But why be coy? Is my reluctance to commit to forces just the overweening ghost of ontic knowledge chiding me for being out of step with popular thought? It is not fitting that I should be weak when defending forces - I should be more decisive! Existential philosopher

Anna Tymieniecka (1990) does not shy from speaking of forces, which for her, “belong to the wild onrush of the universal stream of life” (p. 24). Tymieniecka’s forces are primordial, brute forces, they are wild, and resistant to influence - and they are not separate from being. Indeed, these are forces “bound up in the circuits of the dark zone of the soul” (p. 25). Where Tymieniecka’s innumerable noumenal forces seem to intimately compel being, Goethe’s capitalised single ‘Eternal Force’ (in Naydler, 1996, p. 113) is vast, a vital self-seeking ‘living unity’ endlessly transforming itself, as it seeks, writes Wahl (2017)

to divide itself, to unite itself, to flow into the general, to remain in the specific, to transform itself, to specify itself and, like the living may make itself obvious under a thousand different circumstances, to break forth and to vanish, to solidify and to melt, to freeze and to flow, to expand and to contract. (aphorism 7, para. 26)

Yet for all its grand ontological dynamism, Goethe’s Force does not presuppose a causal cosmic flux, but something altogether more hermeneutic sounding. The passage continues:

Since all of these effects occur in the same time-moment simultaneously, all and everything can happen at the same time. Arising and expiring, creating and destroying, in the same sense and the same way; therefore the specific, which is occurring, appears always as a picture and analogy of the general. (aphorism 7, para. 26)

‘Force’, by both these understandings, is the very stuff of life showing itself unreservedly; it is that which “dares to live and realise itself out of itself, and by doing so, illumines itself” (Jaspers, 1957b, p. 830). Perhaps ‘force’ is what we encounter when we are struck by something, what we long for when everything feels bland, and what we resist when things go awry – that is, when things go their own way, without us. The question concerning forces is not an abstract conceptual question at all, but is existentially lived, and to wrestle with the idea of forces is to ask how might forces be understood from the perspective of being - that is, ontologically, from within the forceful experience. The notion of forces gives me a way to understand how I am energetically involved, at the level of my innermost being, with that which, in me, and by me, seems to be ‘not me’.

I let forces show the way.

Encountering ‘the way’

I begin this hermeneutic unravelling of forces firstly through the notion of ‘the way’. I do not presume to describe ‘the way’ in terms of the Way, or Tao, where “the Tao, though itself motionless, is the means of all movement and gives it law” (Wilhelm, 1987, p. 11), but I will just make the observation that, at this time in our history, paradigm-shifting developments in quantum physics (see especially Bohm & Hiley, 2006; Capra, 1976; Zukav, 1979/1991) seem to be revealing something very like Tao. That kind of Way - like Goethe’s Eternal Force, perhaps? - is capitalised precisely *because* it cannot be explained but stands for itself, as itself. Instead, I write of ‘the way’ inside quote marks to remind me that this ‘way’ is *not* absolute, a law, a principle; but rather, a proxy for something ineffably ‘way-ful’ in our experience of being in learning design.

To begin, two stories from Edward. In the first, he opens to view the presence of ‘the way’, and in the second, he shows how ‘the way’ is present, even when it is not.

‘Not me, but the way’

I had this real moment. I was sitting there at home, and I went hang on, we’re banging on about we want them to learn that this practice starts with the people and asking them what their shared concerns are. I was so dangerously close to not even doing that. So the workshop I ran recently for the external students, I purposefully made a design decision to go ‘it’s up to me how I run it’. I had creative freedom, and I decided: I’m going to practice what I teach.

I sent an online survey around to everyone who was planning to come, and said, ‘hey, tell me what concepts are you struggling with, what would you like to do for this workshop?’ And they said ‘no-ones done that before’, and so that was cool. I made the workshop very conversational, dialogical, I asked what their learning priorities were, and we broke up into groups and we workshoped things, and I was like ‘we can talk about these ideas, what do you want to focus on?’ and they were like, ‘we’re nervous about the major assignment, we want to workshop that’, and I was like ‘cool, let’s do that for two days’. In one part of the workshop I thought ‘ah! an opportunity to demonstrate [this practice]’ and I facilitated a very crude consensus-building conversation with thirty students.

One guy right at the end of the workshop said ‘I get it! now you’re doing the practice with us, and the course is about the practice’ and I went [snaps fingers] and I said ‘look, yes, it’s

not that we're razor sharp, but it's a way, and it's messy, because you open up to different opinions, and interests...'

I got one or two feedback points at the end. A couple of people kicked back and said it would have been nice to have the more formal academic stuff, and I was like 'I could have done that!' but then one student came up and she was deep into her degree and she had been to a lot of these compulsory workshops, and said 'this is completely different to every other workshop I've been to' and she was grinning and she went, 'it's so surprising!'. She loved it. This student made a point of affirming – not me, but the way. It's encouraging, isn't it! I felt it was personally encouraging, but what she was responding to was a way of doing it, not me. And I'm committed to that way. (Edward, Story 7)

Edward speaks of 'the way' without needing to say what he means by it. When Edward says "*this student made a point of affirming – not me, but the way*" he is not speaking about his manner of teaching, but of something 'more' than himself. While it is not the intention in phenomenological analysis to interpret what Edward 'means', it is nevertheless *intrinsically* meaningful that Edward speaks of this ineffable something without feeling the need to say what, exactly, he means by it. Perhaps 'the way' is that which requires no reasoned understanding?

- *But* (I can hear you say), it is reasonable to think that Edward is simply taking for granted that I, the listener to his story, as a fellow educator, will interpret what he calls 'the way' as a pedagogy or methodology apposite to the subject matter in hand. Perhaps this is so. But I think there is 'more' going on besides this, too: I think Edward is pointing to something less formed, yet more formidable. Yes, when Edward says "*I'm committed to that way*", he seems to affirm that he is educatively bonded to something not of his making, that has already being given, and is available to be given into the event of the lesson. We can understand this only if we let go of the notion of 'the way' as a method of instruction that rolls out educative theory into action, as if it were a carpet of experience that takes the students to a door of learning on the other side of teaching. In its place, we can approach 'the way' as something that was always and is already going on, a self-ordered goings-on that the educative event 'slips into', so to speak, and is taken along by.

But how can this goings-on be understood? Heidegger, in *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954/1977), explains that ontologically, 'the way' of a thing that we approach and seemingly 'ensnare' with our conceiving of it, has already gathered us into itself, and so

unfolds itself as a revealing (p. 19). In other words, what we think we capture with our imaginings, has already captured us. Elsewhere, (1946/2002a), Heidegger tells us that this 'open region' [*Gegend*] is a place "into and within which that which has arrived lingers [*verweilt*]" (p. 261), a place of passage from concealment into unconcealment, a transitioning between "coming forth and going away" (p. 263). So too then, in the educative event of Edward's story, what was already going on is suddenly seen as such, and the students, surprised by the revelation, exclaim "*I get it!*" and "*it's so surprising!*". Is this learning we are witnessing? Certainly it seems that their encounter with what is going on carries force, strength, and pedagogical power – yes, it carries the forces of learning in its coursing.

So now here is a phenomenological question: if 'the way' is always going on, might it be present even in its seeming absence? By Edward's next story, I think 'yes':

'Something is missing'

In the first assignment that they do, there was one moment in the tutorial where we had done it all, marked it, and then one of the students said to me quietly, almost sheepishly, 'why do we do it? What's the point?' And I was almost silenced. It was so obvious. And I went 'that's a really good question though'. (Edward, Story 4)

Here, the student, by his acerbic question, reveals that something that ought to be going on is missing. It is as if the student expects to have an encounter, expects to come into something that is already 'there' – expects, even, to be surprised? Ironically, though, by the act of asking the deeply pedagogical question, this student *himself* reveals 'the way'. Yes, in this story, it is the teacher who is taken by surprise by the forces of learning, for while his lesson design did not purposively carry the forces of learning into experience, the forces came around and hit him on the back of the head, so to speak! For me, this short story is very telling, for it methodologically asks for, and finds, the phenomenon's 'presence in absence' - and so affirms in experience the meaningful existentiality of the forces of learning.

Learning - if it is, or has, a way or force of its own - is something to be reckoned with. Or, at least, it is a reckoning with that which is not in my experience, yet is going on. Educators wiser than I have felt their way towards a similar understanding. Biesta (2015b), for instance, holds that education

can also be understood as an encounter with something that is radically new, something that students precisely do not already have. Moreover, it is possible to think of education then as an encounter with something that comes to you without reason, so to speak, because if it is something that is really new, that really comes from the outside, students may not yet have any ‘anchor points’ for connecting what is coming to them, and may therefore not (yet) be able to see the ‘reason’ of what is coming to them. (p. 240)

In other words, for the student – for the teacher, too! - to encounter something educatively is to find oneself face to face with something, and by that realisation, to find oneself faced with an existential choice: to commit to this new ineffable ‘something’ that one has come into contact with, and make it one’s own - or not. Like plunging into an already-coursing river, there is a terrifying strength in the current of that pedagogic moment. But more precisely: realising the strength of it, *I have already entered into it* – I have realised it in me. My choice is not whether to turn away – an encounter cannot be undone! – but instead, to choose how to ‘be’ with this newness.

The character of this educative encounter is surely what Heidegger (1927/2010) calls a ‘phenomenal encounter’, where what is shown is a “self-showing”, shown from out of itself, in oneself, as the “distinctive way something can be encountered” (p. 29). In Marion’s philosophy (2003), this encounter is not a special occasion but the manner (‘the way’?) in which all experience comes about. The experience of such an encounter will range from mild to shocking; but it is the *resistance* of the individual to the givenness of the current, the flow, the coursing, that is the revelatory action that stands to reveal ‘being’ to itself:

the extent of phenomenalization depends on the resistance of the given-to to the brute shock of the given. By resistance I mean resistance in the sense, suggestive because it is ordinary, of electricity: in a circuit, when one restricts the free movement of electrons—whether by design or accidentally—then a part of their energy is dissipated as heat or light. In this way, the resistance transforms the unseen movement into phenomenized light and heat. The greater the resistance to the impact of the given (first of all, lived experiences, intuitions), the more that phenomenological light shows itself. Resistance—the proper function of the given-to—becomes the index of the transmutation of that which gives itself into that which shows itself. (p. 103)

Marion’s vivid analogical description of phenomenalisation helps with the interpretation of the forces of learning because it powerfully evokes what it feels like to come into phenomenal encounter in the context of a lesson, or what we long for when the encounter does not

eventuate. And, because this description is so fitting, I am becoming surer in myself that learning and teaching can themselves be understood as phenomenal events. Yes, in the educative context, I am entitled to see my self-becoming 'as' learning. Might it be that the only difference between the moment of phenomenalisation and the event of learning is that in the educational context these intimate phenomenal encounters are staged to occur; staged and tended, so that the ontological resistance of the student is carefully magnified and made visible at the level of mundane existence? Is this the thrust of our learning design work, then – to *amplify* our resistance? If so, perhaps this is why when, in Edward's story, the student asked the question about the point of the lesson, 'the way' became suddenly "*so obvious*" for Edward: the resistance was begged and amplified *in the question itself*.

Learning disappears into being

Truly, who can say what learning is? Learning is so intimate, so private, so personal, so near to the bone of my being, I feel I am standing in its blind spot. How subtle, how ephemeral and how ungraspable learning is! Experientially, as a learner, I can only wonder at it, for the moment I experience learning, it disappears into my being - it becomes me, irreversibly. As an educator, I can never be sure of it. Efforts to name, claim and structure learning cannot predict, compel, contain, track or secure educative certainty - not in oneself, and not on behalf of others. I realise, at bottom, that I *cannot* know about learning, because the very stuff of learning is a dance with not-knowing.

What is learning seems to show itself ironically, then; that is, it shows itself 'to be' by its very disappearance into being. It is like learning *gives itself away* to be, and thus, gives itself 'a-way' to be. In any case, when learning disappears into my being, its vanishing point is my own horizon. Like Goethe wrote, profoundly:

in all that lives the Eternal Force works on;
for everything must dissolve into nothingness,
if it is to remain in Being. (in Naydler, 1996, p. 113)

Yes, Goethe, just like learning dissolves into nothingness when it becomes me. The poet Rilke might have something to say about this, too -

- And these Things,
which live by perishing, know you are praising them; transient,
they look to us for deliverance: us, the most transient of all.
they want us to change them, utterly, in our invisible heart,
within – oh endlessly – within us! Whoever we may be at last.

Earth, isn't this what you want: to arise within us,
invisible? Isn't it your dream
to be wholly invisible someday? – O Earth: invisible!
What, if not transformation, is your urgent command? (Rilke, 2009, p. 59)

Goethe echoed the same notion when he said “whatever appears in the world must divide if it is to appear at all [and] what has been divided seeks itself again” (in Naydler, 1996, p. 52). All this makes me wonder: in that impulse for re-binding, are we caught up in some cosmic conversation where nature, says Goethe, “converses with herself and with us through a thousand phenomena” (p. 117)? Might learning be folded somewhere in this intimate world-co-manifestation? Who knows? One cannot come out of the company of poets without some amplification of the phenomenon, but truly, there is something about learning that defies our measure of it. Why not think of learning as hermeneutically taking “what is other” into my understanding (Biesta, 2019b, p. 62), disappearing its otherness into my being? Ha! - constructivism’s mirror-universe, perhaps? *Something* profound is afoot in learning, that learning design can only court. Blindly, I am dealing with forces at once my own and more than me; and, in the encounter between these two ontological states, even as I hesitate on these slippery thoughts, the wild unknowable forces of learning are already moving in me: *are moving me*.

A feel for learning as being moved

Beth’s next story is another story of a learningful phenomenal encounter; and again, it is an encounter that is shown through its being absent. Here, we follow the forces of learning into being as they *move* being:

‘Getting in me’

I can think of a time when I was working with another lecturer. But every slide, every slide had another quote, another quote, more information. I was just going – ‘can you take off

half of that text and just let me think about the idea for a minute!’ It’s like oh my god, oh my god! I’d be stopping here and checking ‘how is everyone?’ and ‘let’s have a conversation!’. It was really hard, because I could see how all of that information was good to have, but I wasn’t sure that it was getting in. Because - it’s not getting in me. There was no room for me at all. It just didn’t work for me. I thought ‘what am I meant to do?’ (Beth, Story 7)

Beth’s story appears ordinary and familiar at first glance: we are in the throes of a lesson pouring forth an avalanche of content, with no space for the breath of possible learning to be breathed. Yet there are profundities in this story that bear upon the question of forces, and especially, this notion of the disappearance of learning into being. To begin, we can recognise again the presence of a conscience of learning and the inner workings of the question. Noticeable too, is Beth’s struggle for the sake of the self - the deep work commanded by the educative bond.

All this has been opened before in other stories. But this story also opens something else to view - something that is absent, actually. It is like Beth is feeling for that without which ‘learning’ is forlorn; something that is not “*getting in*”. But how can ‘getting in’ be understood? Surely not as transmission of information, as if information were a substance that soaks in to the skin or the brain and converts to learning, as it were. Neither do we go out of ourselves to fetch our experiences and “return with one’s booty to the ‘cabinet’ of consciousness” (Heidegger, 1927/2010, p. 62). No, we need to take our attention off the subject-object split and approach with a more ontological, phenomenological understanding the ‘getting-in-ness’ that Beth is feeling for and finding missing. What is it, then? Is it getting in-volved? No doubt Beth wants to be more ‘in the way’ of teaching, more personally and actively involved in this co-teaching situation. But there is something ‘more’ that Beth is feeling for: something unexpected, something with its *own way* that she can encounter and that will get into her and move her. Yes, I think Beth is holding open for the forces of learning. She wants to feel those forces on behalf of the students, *to know that learning is possible*.

This sensitised mode of ‘feeling for’ rather than seeing helps us to locate vicariously in the classroom with Beth and share a sense of the event, the way she seems to reach out with her feelers for something, and to feel what she feels – to feel the lack. To elevate feeling over seeing as the primary mode of knowing is to invite intimacy, for in feeling we are involved, whereas in seeing, we objectify: “the eye”, as architect-philosopher Juhani Pallasmaa

(1996/2005) notes, “is the organ of distance and separation... the eye surveys, controls and investigates” (p. 46). Yes, while forces are invisible to the eye, they seem to have a life of their own which when encountered can be felt as shock, intuition, urge, resistance, or something like Astrid’s ‘flushes’, or as something absent. Or, forces might be felt, as Beth relates in this relatable anecdote about anticipating the event of the lesson, as *a feeling of self-being* -

‘I can see their faces’

Once I go, I’m going to see, and I know who they are, I can see their faces, I can feel them in the room, all of that. And I can feel me being in that space. So when that’s closer... (Beth, Story 12)

Perhaps the forces of learning bring learning closer. Is this proximity what Beth is feeling for? Or does learning *itself* have a phenomenal signature that I can tell it by? Sometimes, I think this is so. I recall a moment when I personally and profoundly ‘felt’ myself learning in a tutorial: I felt the encounter become me. The feeling was that of *being moved*. – Not just emotionally, but all of me; it was a sense of irreversibility from that moment on. The movement was – yes – that something ‘got in me’ and changed me: I could feel who I was in that moment, because I was no longer quite myself, as I used to be. It was sense of... what? - ‘becoming’ folding in to ‘being’? It was nothing that I knew, at least.

That I cannot know what moves me... means that I am original but irreversible; I cannot tread the ground I come from. I can know neither its being nor its non-being, and yet, as possible Existenz reacting to itself and other Existenz, I can sense it. (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 226)

Knowing what this feels like, as an educator, I now hunt for it, feeling for whatever has the pedagogic potential to move being. I try, if you like, to *draw* the forces of learning in closer, by the ‘the way’ I configure the lesson; I am full of nothing but imagination, sincerity, and hope.

In learning, then, I invite the moreness of the world to come closer and disappear into my being. What a strange irony! But as Jaspers says, “the point of given things, of situations, of challenges comes to be that in their definiteness and particularity of each moment they *become myself*” – (1932/1970b, p. 106). Or we can understand this by following Marion (2002)’s vein of thought, where I am the givenness *becoming itself*, because in being given, givenness comes, paradoxically, at the same time from elsewhere and from itself; the

givenness comes “from its own depths to its own form” (p. 124), and so retains its ‘elsewhereness’ in, or as, its form. The moreness, then, in the event of learning, is given as *depth*. And since each phenomenal event of givenness is unrepeatable, unique, and unpredictable (Marion, 2003, p. 171), Jaspers’ cryptic words “I am original but irreversible; I cannot tread the ground I come from” (1932/1970b, p. 226) make a little more sense. Am I the upwelling moreness drawing myself into being? Perhaps ‘learning’ is my being at the bleeding edge of moreness, and perhaps the ‘getting in me’ that Beth was feeling for is a felt sense of self-being at this bleeding edge? Here is a sense of a state of suspended being in both *closing in* and *opening out* occur together - an imagery redolent of the phenomenal character of designing as our figure of freedom, which is involved with these dual motions of open-and-closed. We are dealing in onto-existential morphologies, geometric analogues for states of being/becoming in motion.

Philosophically, there are two notions that speak to the forces of opening out and closing in. Jaspers’ central notion of the ‘encompassing’ (1938/1971) or ‘the Comprehensive’ (1951/2003) is one. The encompassing, like possible Existenz, is a difficult idea to grasp because the encompassing is that which is beyond ideas and beyond any pointing-to (Jaspers, 1938/1971); yet the encompassing is ontologically and existentially necessary, for it is that which makes it possible for reality to behold itself. The encompassing is beyond thinking on, because to even think about the encompassing turns it into object and makes it disappear. But there *is* a possibility of lucidity here, for Jaspers holds that the encompassing is available to us through our experience of worldly things:

The encompassing merely announces itself – in present objects and within the horizons – but it *never* becomes an *object*. Never appearing to us itself, it is that wherein everything else appears. It is also that due to which all things not merely are what they immediately seem to be, but remain transparent. (p. 18)

In the notion of the encompassing, horizons are both possible *and* overcome, for the encompassing is the “horizonless realm encompassing all horizons” (1938/1971, p. 26). Indeed, says Jaspers, the encompassing is where “being remains open”, for the encompassing draws us “on all sides... into the unlimited” (p. 17). Here, then, is the sense of opening out, of being drawn into moreness. The notion of the encompassing can be used in the service of understanding the forces of learning, for “its limitless movement... becomes present as that

which illuminates, as it were, all known objects” (p. 24). It is the *movement* that gives us a clue, for while the encompassing cannot be thought, Jaspers holds that it can be experienced - as a deep shift, an ‘inner jolt’ (Jaspers’ (1932/1970a, p. 78). But there is an ironic key that turns a proper understanding of the encompassing, for in its being that which is beyond knowing, the encompassing cannot and does not give knowledge of being, but its opposite: it “preserves my freedom against knowability” (Jaspers, 1938/1971, p. 23). In other words, when being as we can know it recedes, in its wake, *there* is being. In this regard, the encompassing preserves me in the largest possible sense – the encompassing preserves *the wild bleeding edge*, beyond which is the unthinkable, the true reality (Jaspers, 1957a).

Just as compellingly, Heidegger’s (1946/2002c) words on the notion and motion of *centre* supply a philosophical way of understanding the drawing in or closing in aspect of learning. Heidegger’s centre is “the unheard center of all attracting” which has a force like gravity drawing us in; it “draws each thing into the unbarriered and attracts each thing for the center. This center is the ‘there’ where the gravity of the pure forces takes effect” (p. 224). I wonder - might this centre be the ‘unheard of’ and unsayable blind spot that I can never reach? These forces that are drawing me are my own, after all; they are not drawing me away from myself as if I am fated to arrive somewhere new, and they have no vector that is other than my own self-being. Yet there *is* an urge of sorts. Perhaps the forces of learning are an urge of the soul for the *intensification* of being, to existentially know itself ‘as’ being? Opening out and closing in together: is this motion an ‘opening in’?

Heidegger (1927/2010) writes that in knowing, Dasein “gains a new *perspective of being*” (p. 62). Yet it is only through *releasing* knowing that being can be approached at all. The forces of learning draw us without access to knowing – so they must be lodged in being. Even a philosophical interpretation of these phenomenal forces cannot ‘know’; one can only wonder. Yes, it takes a transcendent philosophy like Jaspers’ (1932/1970a), which itself “stands on the boundary” (p. 78), to approach the forces of learning. In transcending, I do not overcome, I become: I become myself *by* transcending myself, like educator-philosopher James Magrini says (2014, p. 46), for, as Jaspers points out, “transcending is only an act, not a result” (1932/1970a, p. 78). But here’s the rub - for I transcend only by relinquishing my desire for ‘getting’ anything or ‘getting’ anywhere - even for transcending.

Yes, I must concede; I cannot learn learning, I can only let myself be drawn by and moved by learning's forces. In those moments where something does 'get in me', I am humbled beyond words. Might the 'getting in' that Beth is feeling for actually be a 'letting in', a becoming more, made possible by the profound in-drawing openness of the bleeding edge of being?

Gestures: The charge in the crack

Standing at the edge of not/knowning in their learning design work, the educator feels for what moves them. I asked Astrid when she knew a design was 'right'. She said,

'The charge'

They do it. They do it and they respond positively to it. It's about me feeling in the room... feeling the energy or not... they're engaged. They are looking at me, to begin with. They're answering questions, they're talking, they're looking at me. [Thinks.] It's not 'electric', that's too much - there's a vibrancy. Nobody is asleep on the desk! [laughs] - I have had that. Yes, there's a vibrancy in the room, an alertness, an aliveness. (Astrid, Story 10)

Can you *feel* this classroom situation, alive with energy - as if the design is discharging itself 'at surface'? Yes - there is a 'charge'! But what is this charge? Could it be that the student is 'charged' with their own conscience of learning? Might it be the "phenomenalized light and heat" of manifestation that Marion (2003, p. 103) pointed to? Might it be the energy of the educative space; a space in which a charge might pass, might crackle and fizz - and might this space be the self-same crack between two planes of being, a crack niggled by the existential workings of the question, and held open for its existential potency by the freedom-figuring work of being in design?

As a student and as a teacher, I open myself to the crack, as it were, in the hope of learning 'more' of who I am. The forces of learning carry this moreness into my experience. I come into encounter with myself because I find there is more than me, and more to me / I find there is... moreness.

Oh, but doesn't being *long* for those cracks! My being does, at least, and Zaner (1970) thinks so too; his phenomenology of the self reveals a self always 'urgently' seeking to make itself outwardly manifest and visible to others so that, by its declarative impulse, the self

might be awakened to itself, to see itself in its intensity, its immediacy. Yes, it is like being comes to the surface, and opens there into existential risk. As a student, if I come towards that crack in the hope of learning, I must trust that the crack I surrender into is for the sake of my being; I must trust in the inherent goodness of the educative bond. Maybe that is why Bachelard (1958/2014) understands the 'surface of being' not as a declarative impulse, as Zaner does, but as a place of intimacy, "that region where being *wants* to be both visible and hidden", where "the movements of opening and closing are so numerous, so frequently inverted, and so charged with hesitation, that we could conclude on the following formula: man is half-open being" (p. 237). Yes. Whatever is gestured at the surface is yet "rooted in a profound depth of being" (p. 239), and it is like a charge arcs across that crack between origin and surface. Perhaps this is what Astrid experienced as "*a vibrancy in the room, and alertness, an aliveness*": a 'charge', a discharge, a palpable force of learning. Not just Astrid: no doubt every student caught up in that educative situation felt it too! Might they have witnessed in themselves, and might we now join them in witnessing, the forces of learning in action? But of forces, there are only glimpses. While the afterglow of learning might linger for a while on the skin of perception, learning itself, if it is truly world-becoming, is spent without remainder.

Remarks in closing, and opening the next....

The strange phenomenal character of 'learning' surely haunts the educator. Who can say what learning truly is, when its appearance is marked by its disappearance? It seems that the question of what is learning radically and unconditionally holds learning open; that is, it holds learning open *for itself*, and to answer it would be to destroy it. I can speculate with philosophy about what is learning (or better, where is learning, and where does it go?) - but learning by its very nature will always exceed my knowing of it. This bond I have with learning means that I am learning about learning. Learning is always 'more' than my present self. Yet it is given by my self to my self as a force of 'moreness'. In the radical openness of this kind of understanding of what is learning, one can really only open to it, and hope for its passage into being.

I do not know what is learning. / but I can know myself, if I am resolute and attentive, and perhaps then bear myself 'as' question... the question that beholds itself as it disappears

into being and becomes me. As it passes through me I become awake, and ask, is this learning? Am I learning, now?

While it is not the focus of this study to explore the phenomenon of learning as such, it is clear to me now that to be in learning design is to be intimately involved with the question of what is learning through a feeling for its forces; for the traces and gestures of learning in experience, and for the profound existential encounters with learning that reveal being's bleeding edge to the self. I cannot in all conscience leave these forces of learning aside as if they did not matter to learning design. The forces of learning are the incalculable winds that draw me into the intimacies of learning design in the first place, and since they cannot be grasped, they render question and conscience necessary to my work; they are that which the workings of the question and a conscience of learning bear witness to.

How to know the way

I am not the lawful wind and I cannot follow myself,
but I can trace the dusty tracks
(who knows what went before - giants dragging clubs!)
I am not the one who beats down the bush,
but by these seeming broken bits, I seem to know the way.

If there is a sudden turn in the path, or
if whatever is ahead happens to be dancing a jig,
or taking whatever it so pleases to call *rest* (not on-the-way at all!)
- or is in that moment bent over a pretty stone
that seems to have grown in the shape of a heart –
then we will both be caught by the other
on sudden common ground.

- Turns out, *the way* is not a path after all,
but the possibility of encounter with the wayless wild.

Strangely, I seem to have raced ahead;
I find myself anticipating my bold arrival.
The law that I am not is already mine
I am governed by the unruly winds of being
ever-forming, ever-breaking.

Nine: The rule of breaking

In Hull, over a dish of jellied meat, he had mused about freedom. One had it if one didn't have to tell others in advance what one planned to do. Or if one kept quiet about it. Half a freedom: if one had to announce one's plans in advance. Slavery: if others could foretell what one would do.

- Sten Nadolny, *The Discovery of Slowness*

Introduction: Breaking insists

The forces of learning are not tamable or namable, but whatever they are, I long for them to be present in my educative work. In fact, I am beginning to realise that I long for them precisely because they are untamable. Yes, there is a force in learning design which must break even itself, and *that* is the phenomenal focus of this last and most intimate aspect of the phenomenon of being in learning design, *the rule of breaking*.

This chapter comes out of, breaks through, and exceeds what has been given in the previous chapters. I have been arriving for a while now, courting breaking through the crack, the brink, the bleeding edge – but there was more behind all this, a force behind the force: and now here I am, in the weird company of the ironic, existentially energetic rule that *there is no arrival*, only a constant turning on the axis of being/not being.

Unlike the last chapter, where I was overtaken by the forces of learning, the rule of breaking did not come upon me from behind and surprise me; in fact, it had been waiting its turn – I knew it would be written, and written last. I was looking forward to writing it, anticipating its final word. But as I edged towards the elucidation of this unruly finding, I began to be afraid of it, for fear of what it might unleash - I was already feeling quite broken in my work. But everything that I have learned about learning design has brought me to this personal point of no return: I find I am already involved, and breaking is already here with me - there is no turning back now! I can only respond in kind to breaking's own ragged-edged refusal to be 'done'.

All this is bound to break

The academics I spoke to all confessed: for all their constructions, in the end, *something else breaks through*. Astrid's story points directly to it -

'At the last minute'

It has to be completely constructed, I do that as a support mechanism. I spend weeks on this really detailed program, and then I go – actually, this is how I'm gonna do it [laughs]. And that might occur to me two minutes before I walk into the room. Yesterday at the last minute I just mixed up the order completely. I thought 'I'm trying something new here' because I just think it's going to work better.

I think it's because I have a moment of clarity and empowerment, and I go err, no, I know what's gonna work for them, and suddenly the penny drops, whereas all the way along I'm probably feeling a bit edgy and uncertain, even though I've got this careful construction around it, it's just not feeling good. (Astrid, Story 5)

In this story it is the breaking that catches my eye, phenomenologically, and it is the breaking that I want to understand, hermeneutically. Breaking through, breaking out, breaking in, breaking down, breaking up - what is going on? What is going on is 'life': existential liveliness – the hum-and-shock that exceeds, releases, reveals, turns, surges, and crackles -

Life is like that: its vitality withers unless it is perpetually renewed, and so soon as it is seized in one form it slips into another, even the opposite; so that paradox is the least inadequate formulation. Nothing is safe, once and for all. The Transcendence of the world, the meaning of life, is found alike in frustration and failure and in consummate achievement; but it is not either, and it is not found in either if they remain what they are and are not cancelled and transcended. (Blackham, 1952, p. 59)

Yes, "life is like that" - and so too is human being like that, is learning like that, and is design like that - indeed, there seems to be a force of learning 'as breaking' that underlies *all this*; and this force is phenomenally manifest in the work of learning design. In teaching, do we not make it our business to break down concepts, arguments, and tasks; and do we not punctuate the flow of the lesson with little breaks in the schedule? Yes, thoughtful acts of breaking are part of the fabric of a learning design. But these kinds of breaks are intended: scheduled, structured, aligned – they are, strictly speaking, more like making than breaking as such. These structured breakings are not the same as a force of learning that arrives *by itself* in the

mode of breaking. This autogenic kind of breaking is an existential-pedagogic breaking – it has its own impulses and intentions. Why not? If, as Biesta (2019a) says, education “has its own concern to take care of” (p. 1), perhaps learning does too – and perhaps the forces of learning ‘as breaking’ are ‘the way’ it takes care of itself? Intrinsically radical, this is the kind of breaking that will break even structured breaks, all for the larger sake of possible learning.

This kind of breaking is more violation than volition - nothing is safe! In the mode of breaking, the forces of learning are at their most extreme; the unknowability of what is learning is not so much obscure, as redundant: it does not pay to even ask the question. And, since the root meaning of ‘redundant’ is ‘overflow’, perhaps I can say that the forces of breaking are not ‘counter to’ but *exemplify* the upwelling moreness, for they are ‘more’ than moreness itself; overflowing, they exceed experience, and destroy knowledge – even of themselves! Yes, the forces of breaking should be left to themselves; they are not for understanding. Like a pedagogical question, which is ‘a question without a questioner’ (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 372), the forces of learning ‘as breaking’ are a force without an enforcer. These forces are bound by their own kind of law, and the only way to deal with them is to be grateful. They seem to take care of things all by themselves.

All this is bound to break / I am bound only to the bond.

Heidegger (1935/2014) points to these forces of breaking as a force inherent in human being -

from the ground up [human being] deals with and conserves the familiar only in order to break out of it and to let what overwhelms it break in. Being itself throws humanity into the course of this tearing-away, which forces humanity beyond itself, as the one who moves out to Being, in order to set Being to work and thus to hold open beings as a whole. (pp. 181-182)

Astrid must be waiting for this to happen - for the forces of learning to break in and overwhelm her; to teach *her* what is going to “*work better*”, as she says. But they cannot be forced, these forces. There is nothing to do but to go through the motions of constructing. Meanwhile, it is as if the forces of learning as breaking build up behind Astrid... like a wave they gather strength... then suddenly they break - “*the penny drops*” - and constructions fall. But it is not that the sudden breaking suddenly reveals a hitherto hidden ‘better way’; the

breaking, you see, does not break 'for' anything, except itself – it is the breaking itself that brings learning into lively possibility.

Do you think Astrid knows, in her bones, that while a careful construction is nice to have - like a beautiful knot tied in the sun - it is only a proxy for something much more lived and living? But why do you think Astrid would put in weeks of *"careful construction"* if she knows the design is bound to break? For the pleasure that crafting a work brings, perhaps? But all the while there is an undertow to her labour; a counterforce that does not undermine as such, but underlies and accompanies its careful construction, and Astrid can feel it - as she herself says, *"all the way along I'm probably feeling a bit edgy and uncertain, even though I've got this careful construction around it, it's just not feeling good"*. Yes, too much construction, and there comes a creeping feeling that something has been ignored, or has fallen below, out of sight. No matter how much construction, the learning design will not settle. A conscience of learning knows it, the workings of the question needle it, and her feelers are feeling its forces: Astrid knows but cannot say that, in the end, for the sake of the self, and for learning and for renewal, *all this construction is for breaking*. Her labour makes breaking possible.

My terrible freedom

Feeling *"edgy and uncertain"* keeps the situation existentially potent, signalling to the self that there is 'more'. One might care to turn towards and mine that feeling of discontent for its deeper content - or one might simply wait for the breaking to occur. *"The penny drops"* – one comes into sudden self-encounter, and in that moment find the world has turned upside-down (Mount, 2003, p. 95). How exciting! In the working context, especially in the educative context, an existential encounter does not need to be an abysmal encounter – it might feel heady and liberating, or I might feel I have been released from something I did not want to do, or that I have finally, suddenly arrived at something more truthful. Mount says the existential encounter is an encounter with what is fundamental – the penny dropping is like a sudden deepening, perhaps? There is a sense of arrival at a place that could not have been anticipated, yet it was there *"all the way along"*, as Astrid said. John Berger's (2011) atmospheric words come to mind, where in the act of drawing one *"accompanies something invisible to its incalculable destination"* (p. 14) – yes, as if the drawing itself were drawing you on! Yes, there is a sense in which the incalculable always exceeds the calculable – perhaps it

even draws it on - and we follow through, executing our work, blindly feeling our way; for what can we follow, if not the motion of the work itself? There is a clue to understanding, here, for the word execute, at root, means "to follow out, to follow to the grave" (Harper, n.d.). I wonder if it is just me, but at times I have a sense of foreboding that my work might come to rest, not in glorious moreness, but in some kind of hollow construction like a tomb. The more I execute it, the deader it gets.

Astrid must take that risky ride, too, and follow her work through to she *knows-not-where*. Yes, it is like Astrid accompanies herself "*all the way along*" as some kind of shadow... she brings the crack with her, and the folds of its luminous darkness promise 'more' – more depth, more meaningfulness, something fundamental – who knows! Jaspers (1932/1970b) says that, while we cannot know what will come "as we act and build in our limited realm" nevertheless the content of the future haunts our work now, "darkly, as the presence of eternity in the moment" (p. 143). Yes, the 'incalculable destination' draws like the adumbrating wave with its own obscure but palpable forces. While the ways of being in learning design cannot be anticipated, still there seems to be a sense of inevitability that the design, as an artifice, is bound to break: bound by the educative bond, bound to being, bound to be itself, *in the end*. Ironically, what seems to be the secret beating heart of this enigmatic educational genre of design is a state of breaking, which keeps it wild and lively, *but cannot be designed*.

Like Astrid and the others, I am a wilful being and I want to take that ride; I *choose to surrender*, if you like, and deliberately let myself be drawn by the forces of learning 'as breaking' to *who-knows-where*. Why? Maybe because these forces are, weirdly, part of the educative bond that I keep with myself: I break the bond to keep the bond, somehow. I depend on the forces of learning as breaking because they have their own kind of wilfulness, are stronger than my present work, and I dimly understand that this makes it possible to do and be more than I can will on my own. It is by these forces I feel I might channel that "something more" which Jaspers says, "makes me myself" (1932/1970b, p. 42). I am open – waiting, even - like Astrid is, for my constructions to fall, and to find myself suddenly "*trying something new*": a newness where I can *once again* in unconditional action risk knowing for being. Yes, perhaps it is like this: it is the construction of my learning design that shows me in the here-now what I have conceded along the way with every design decision, but it is the

breaking of it that shows me existentially what I have to lose, and realises unconditional moreness in the situations and constraints of the here-now.

Jaspers (1932/1970b) holds that humans are characterised by an unnatural capacity for this kind of unconditional action: we break with nature, with our very existence: it is the breaking that makes us human (pp. 258-260). For Jaspers, a human being is an “in-between creature” (p. 260), a liminal, half-open soul drawn by transcendence “into the abyss of its being” (p. 261). Is the abyss the break *par excellence*? Or, is the abyss primal nature itself, the “deepest, darkest zone” where “the soul has its roots” (Tymieniecka, 1990, p. 24), and from where it draws its forces? Nature – our own human nature - seems to have the dark of the abyss built right in to its natural laws. Existence is ‘abysmal’ because it is beyond knowing, and “because once we venture a ‘plunge’ into it, it seems to draw us down to a bottomless depth” (p. 24). Perhaps Jaspers’ transcendence and Tymieniecka’s primal darkness are not so far apart after all, for likewise, in unconditional action, I do not know if I am breaking into my freedom or plunging into the abyss of my primogenital nature. In both, I am acting from my blind spot. Yes, transcendence and primal darkness are the same to me: my freedom *is* a kind of abyss, and it is terrible, because at the very same time that I am “hoping at the bottom of it to meet myself” (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 159), like Jaspers I know in my innermost bones there is no bottom to it (1962/1967, p. 77) and there will be no grand arrival. I know too, in my bones, that any move I make in freedom’s direction is irreversible, for in that move all that I hold dear as possible to me will be forfeit to whatever is real. I am torn – I think “I do not want to become real; I want to stay possible” (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 161) - but then I think, *oh, give me cracks! – I want to see if the nothingness can be a space in which to soar in freedom!* (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 38).

*I dance on the lip of the abyss. Half of me is falling anyway / has already fallen in.
Dammit, half of me is always ‘in’.*

In the face of this abyss one can try to shut one's eyes. One can erect one illusion after another. The abyss does not retreat. Theories of nature, doctrines about history, do not remove the confusion. They further confuse things until they are unrecognizable, since they themselves are nourished by the confusion. (Heidegger, 1946/2002a, p. 281)

There is no getting away from it: the existential condition is to live with the invisible abyss in one’s sights, and somehow deal with the terrible freedom that is ‘being human’. Indeed, it is

precisely because the abyss cannot be outrun or overcome that it keeps everything real; and *that* is why the abyss sees and saves everything for humankind (Heidegger, 1946/2002c, p. 202). Yes, says Heidegger (1946/2002a, p. 281), *the danger of the abyss is itself the rescue* - and on that, Jaspers would no doubt agree. Maybe that is why, deep down in our human bones, we love what is terrible and are always breaking what we have so carefully made?

The abyss is not all doom filled, but has forces of its own. Draughts from its depths incite in me a healthy naughtiness that breaks just for the hell of it – an ‘existential naughtiness’, perhaps? Why not, for the word naughtiness is rooted etymologically in the abysmal notion of ‘nothingness’ – and let’s not forget the ‘almost nothings’ like holes, shadows and cracks (McDaniel, 2010). Might (degrees of) nothingness be a ‘quality’ of things, and might this explain why naughtiness irrepressibly attends our work (if I can be so bold to include you in this equation)? This might be one way of understanding Astrid’s willingness to break her design: that the urge to break is a human urge, a force of being that breaks the conditional for a larger, deeper, unconditionality; that is, for *nothing at all*. Onto-existentially, breaking is just being, turning on the axis of notness – and that is all.

Perhaps Astrid’s urge to make and urge to break are but sides of a coin, a manifestation of the substantive ‘and’ in everyday action? For this, I turn for understanding to Jaspers’ philosophic notion of ‘the Law of the Day and the Passion for the Night’ (1948, as cited in Blackshield, 1965), which speaks to this both-ways urge to build and to break:

The Law of the Day orders our existence, demands clarity, consistence and loyalty, binds us to reason and idea, to the one and to ourselves. It demands actualization in the world, that we build within time, that we complete our existence on an endless road.... *The Passion for the Night* breaks through every order.... It is the urge to ruin oneself in the world in order to complete oneself in the depth of worldlessness. (p. 108)

Both modes of being are needed, nocturnal and diurnal. They are tumbling, and entangled. Hoffman (1957, p. 107) explains that it is not a matter of choosing between them, and neither are they to be resolved or synthesised. Rather, they are like two poles of existence between which Existenz is suspended, for the soul needs both order and disorder, loyalty and betrayal, the rational and the irrational. - Actually, Hoffman’s own description of the Passion for the Night as “the urge to darkness, to the earth, to the mother” (p. 107) sounds uncannily like

Tymieniecka's primal zone of the soul. However, in any interpretation, while we need both modes of being, we cannot *understand* both, for one is not for understanding.

No, the Passion for the Night makes no sense at all, and this is precisely because *it is against making sense*. This side of human being is a kind of existential vertigo (Jaspers, 1932/1970b), a seductive urge to be done with it and just "hurl myself down"; to let everything go "to wrack and ruin" (p. 231). I think – is this a way to escape the superficial nether-world of being? But sometimes, too, I think I go into The Night just to be alone there... it is the most intimate of escapes. Either way, the experience is both deeply terrible and deeply attractive... ah, but it has a rare rich *depth*. In the end, the Passion for the Night is essential to my being, for it returns me to my existential choice for being, and I once again save myself for the sake of the being. If I did not have The Passion for the Night in my veins, there would be nothing in me to stand against the slavery of too much Law, and nothing *raw* would come from me into the world that was not born already tame. Yes, it is *because of the abyss* that the soul can see 'more' than The Law of the Day (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 261).

Pedagogic breaking

Philosophers and artists live here, on the lip of the abyss, and through their works we can vicariously explore the 'instruction' of the abyss (Heidegger, 1946/2002c, p. 202) – what the abyss has to say about what it means to be human (Tymieniecka, 1990, p. 24). As an educator I can recognise and appreciate this instructive power and I can ask - is the abyss the ultimate educative 'space', perhaps – some kind of dark utopia for learning? Or, since utopia actually means 'no place', I might recognise its pedagogic possibilities not as origin or arrival, and not as a place as such at all, but as a twilight encounter between the self and the terrifying openness of the void. There are rare gifts of guidance here, for the willing -

[The abyss] will have taken me to the limit where man wants to do the impossible, to jump across his own shadow – but in the motion it will have made me see what that motion alone can reveal, what I cannot see without it, and what on my return will now guide my distinct philosophical thinking. (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 231)

There is surely transformative potential in the abysmal encounter, but it is not the kind of learning that can be courted, constructed or designed. Nevertheless, while the existential

forces of breaking cannot themselves be understood, they can instruct a deeper self-understanding.

We break upon a kind of understanding that comes by *not* understanding (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 231), and this is not an easy place to tread. Our institutions of higher education might not care to peer into the abyss, but even so, a vestige of abysmal instruction, vouchsafed by The Passion for the Night in each of its members, might yet be present in the most intimate and everyday expression of that same institution: in the lived experience of the teachers and students. Yes, in the educative event, it is human being that holds sway. As Beth said in the previous chapter, *“once I go, I’m going to see, and I know who they are, I can see their faces, I can feel them in the room, all of that. And I can feel me being in that space. So when that’s closer...”* (Story 12). *“So when that’s closer...”* – then what? Beth does not say, but there is a sense that the closer it gets, the realer it gets. In Beth’s story, as the event of learning begins to take on human form, the structuring of the curriculum ‘gives way’ to *livedness*. The teacher responds with a conscience of learning as the forces of learning bear down as breaking – or as Astrid says, *“I just think it’s going to work better”*. It seems that the curriculum, so carefully constructed, is nothing but a holding-space for something much more real - and that something is breaking itself, felt as a *“moment of clarity and empowerment”*, as Astrid referred to it.

Is this what learning feels like? This breaking, it is pedagogic: it teaches me about learning – it brings me back to learning! Like a wave constantly arriving, it claims me again and again – it *must*, because every time I learn about learning, it disappears into my being. Pedagogic breaking returns me to a once-more original learning, which is surely a blessing for a teacher, who might otherwise fall into the habit of trying to answer the question of what is learning, rather than encounter it in oneself. I think – yes, this moment of learning is real, because it feels original, raw and potent, and this is the kind of experience I want for others.

With breaking alive in me, so to speak, I can bring the breaking with me, right in to the educative event, while it is still fresh and lively -

‘Throwing away the rules’

I went in this week, and I asked them in groups to design their own classroom activity from scratch. I said: ‘get rid of all the rules, let’s forget what you think it looks like – sitting down

and learning about this and that – forget all that, throw it out, remember how bored you were sitting in a classroom as a student? If you could walk into a classroom today completely unfettered, how would you do it for the kids? Go for it!’ So we did that first, whereas I would normally deliver the content first. So I flipped that around. I’d started to think about it the night before, then that morning – it starts at 8am – I grabbed texts and paper, and got them to do it. (Astrid, Story 7)

With this second anecdote from Astrid we can see again how the sudden motion of pedagogical breaking overturns, *‘flipping’* the construction at the last minute, and energising the educative endeavour. We can see too how this energy is conveyed through the teacher’s commitment to action. Yes, the breaking that started the night before was so strong that Astrid *caught it by its essence*, so to speak, and passed it on in full to the students, thereby sustaining and indeed amplifying its pedagogic forces. But this story offers a window within a window, because for these students of teaching, the content of the lesson now invites an experience of the unadulterated directness of being in learning design.

It is really quite profound, what Astrid did - she gave her students the gift of the forces of learning as breaking; and with that, she gave *me* the gift of seeing right through to the very heart of the phenomenon of being in learning design. The key is here, in Astrid’s deeply ironic directive to *“get rid of all the rules”*, which expressly contradicts itself by establishing a rule for its own unruliness. Beautiful. I call this *the rule of breaking*, an ontological and existential *refusal to close*, and whose unpredictable imperative in learning design is to manifest the figure of freedom in one’s teaching.

The law of the lesson

In Astrid’s story, both teaching and learning come out of breaking the rules – and by this action, they reveal a hidden ‘something’ underlying both teaching and learning that the rules are broken ‘for’: something substantial with its own origin, not of me at all, not of my making, and not for breaking. No, making merely imitates it, and breaking merely reveals it. Once revealed as hidden, this certain something turns out to have been necessary all along - as that which the lesson belongs to and seems to always have belonged to. Like Beth’s *“Inheritors of the curriculum”* story (Story 8), you might recall: *“the subject was dead, for me. Then after I taught it for a couple of years I came across this term ‘inheritors of the curriculum’. Well that’s when it went ‘Ahhhh!’”*.

The essential and already-being-givenness of this underlying something is a *sine qua non* characterised by an excess of sufficiency and that is phenomenally ‘saturated’, as Marion (2002) says, with “*more, indeed immeasurably more*” (p. 197) than one’s own intention or even intuition could possibly foresee. Yes, its necessity is already present in its phenomenal appearing. How do I stand before it? I might be relieved, because at last, here is something substantive that is not just a construction of my making; and I might be humbled and awed, for here is something real that everything is revolving on, and that we, the class and I, can all be involved with together; and I might be caught up by the excitement that, because of its timelessness, it may even survive the event of the lesson and go on with us or without us – it might stand outside the problems of time and space. And, like Jaspers’ Law of the Day, this something’s action on the lesson ‘necessarily’ orders, clarifies, binds, and makes actual in the world (Blackshield, 1965). Might this substantive something in the lesson be a *law* of sorts, that is looking me in the eye? I can say this because a law, strictly speaking, is not something which I observe but something that *observes me* with its own certain eye: yes, I am beheld by the lesson’s own law, revealed and revealing at once.

Well met! Just so, and so much so.

Jaspers holds “there is no freedom without law” (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 157). Following this, we could say that design, as the figure of freedom, is also the figure of law. As the figure of law, it expresses a law’s potency *newly* and in actionable form. And as the figure of law, it carries freedom in its form. This is another, more existentially oriented way of seeing and saying design’s ‘affordances and constraints’, or its ‘open and closedness’. In this ironical ontological way, then, discerning the law in the lesson *shows me my freedom*.

Now, with the law of the lesson in place, I am free to break the rules. I can do this because a law and a rule are not the same. A law underlies, whereas a rule applies. Strictly speaking, we don’t break the law, we break ‘the rule of law’; the law itself cannot be broken – that is what makes it a law. Jaspers explains (1932/1970b) that a law attempts to capture the already given essence of what it means to be human in the world, to express it succinctly, and to establish a human contract with it. When I take the law *as my own*, it is an act of free choice. I remain free in this act because I willingly bow to “an imperative I may as well not bow to” (p. 156). Yes, a law retains within itself the freedom to refuse it: I can choose to go along with, or against, the ‘ought’ of the law. Whatever I choose, in my encounter with a law,

even - and especially - in my resistance to it, I come into contact with the “deeper ought” which is *my own law*, if you like (p. 287) - and so in this way, a law shows me, and gives me, myself. A rule, on the other hand, diminishes my selfhood, for it is just a formula which makes a ‘case’ of me (p. 157). A rule en-forces, but a law opens a force to view. A law permits; a rule restricts. A law stays strong whether I go with or against it, whereas I can *break* the rule with my own wilful forces. Being so unnaturally brittle, a rule is bound to break, anyway – yes, it’s saving power is built right in!

Free play with the rules

Now my learning design work is opened like never before because, as a saturated phenomenon, the law in the lesson gives me more than I could imagine – it exceeds my conceptions of it, and in the surplus, my intuition can now play freely (Marion, 2002, p. 200). *What* does intuition play? It plays, says Marion, “the sublime” (p. 198). We can follow to see where it takes us, and we can be “*completely unfettered*” and drawn into play, in the mode of the invitation that Astrid (Story 7) both embodied and threw out to her class. Play, says Gadamer (1975/2004, pp. 106-114), is free of goals; it is a self-renewing motion that “happens, as it were, by itself” (p. 109). What gives play a place to be is *the game* - but the purpose of the game is to be in play – and that is all. In play we make and break the rules as we go along. Yes - is this not what we do in our learning design and teaching work? I am always making, always breaking, always freely starting again. The rules I make with my designs are but play, have their day, and then decay, in endless variety. The lesson is the game by which, and in which, I play.

Here in free play, students and teachers alike are students of the lesson. It seems that, in the mode of play, the law in the lesson shows more, immeasurably more, than anyone could have foreseen, and teaches everyone out of itself. Is this the instructive lesson of the law in the lesson? But the lesson of the law can only be learned from being truly involved with it, by playing with it *in* the lesson – or, as Astrid boldly did with her teacher education students, ‘as’ the lesson. In the mode of play I can ask - what can be learned here? What authority speaks? How far does the authority of the law in this lesson extend? Is there another law, perhaps, that borders this one?

Each lesson has its own law. One learns from the law's specificity and uniqueness, rather than from a concern with the general (Coyne & Snodgrass, 1995, p. 47) – for how can I learn from the general? - nothing 'new' would ever come from that (Schön, 1988, p. 182)! The law in the lesson is always entirely specific about itself, so it is never a heuristic, a maxim, pattern or a model; rather, it is more like an entity, a being who is inexhaustibly deep and complex, and yet open on every side, like me. Held in its gaze, it is *I* that opens to *its* centre, its edges, its textures and moods. This is good: I *want* the law in the lesson to teach *me*, go to work on *me*, change *me*, and so I freely submit to its authority.

In the empirical game, it is said that a rule is proved by its exception. Likewise, phenomenologically, onto-existentially, and pedagogically, a rule is shown by its breaking. And what the broken rule reveals in turn is that which cannot be broken: the law. Thus, I break the rules to find the law, or to find if it is true. Breaking the rules, I come into free play with the law, allowing my felt understanding of the law in the lesson to be confirmed, strengthened and deepened. But the art of breaking is this: when breaking reveals its pedagogical manifest, I must resist immediately ordering this new unruly freedom with new ruliness. I want to safeguard the potency of the givenness so that "it remains potentiality in free motion" (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 122) - and *keeps on giving*. I might, for instance, give the lesson over to the students to work and play with. Discovering the law and the rules of it for themselves would be a strong experience of learning, would it not? - Just as Astrid's lesson on throwing away the rules exemplifies. But breaking, if it were *always* breaking, would become an order too, and so extinguish itself. By its own ironic hand, learning as breaking turns on itself - it must break itself in order to 'be'. Breaking, in the educative mode, is strange: rather than bringing undone, it *satisfies*; and what it satisfies is the law of the lesson and the law of being, together as one. And, finding its satisfaction, breaking seemingly disappears into being along with learning.

How can breaking be 'held', then, within the educative context - if indeed it should or can be held at all? Can I vouchsafe a 'method' of breaking into the lesson design and hope that it gives again, next time? Perhaps I might give in to play, and seek its instruction alongside the students, breaking the rules safely together to find the law, and letting the law in the lesson draw us in and teach us together. Perhaps, too, even while the reality of the law in the lesson can only be perceived by each individual "from the depths of [their] own

selfhood” (Jaspers, 1938/1971, p. 84), I wonder if our free play with it might draw us together?

A next order: The long eye of design

Learning, if it is to come (from breaking or from anywhere) will always come anew. But, over time, a larger learning emerges, that does not disappear in me: *I learn that I can learn about learning* from being ‘in’ a lived and living learning design. I learn that even breaking disappears. I come, slowly, to understand myself, the subject matter, teaching, and learning as intimately bound together. In this regard, the ‘depths’ of my selfhood are temporal depths; reality is revealed slowly as that which does not change while I change. Over time I have come to see *all* of this – my urge to break, my urge to order and construct, the law of the lesson and my free play with the rules – I see all of this come and go with a ‘long eye’, and I find, in this way, that I have come into a next order of understanding being in learning design, which I call *the long eye of design*. True to itself, this next order of understanding appeared, phenomenally, in the manner of itself – that is, it came into my experience as a slow and irreversible breakthrough.

For exploring this final rule of breaking – a slow breaking through to next order - I turn to Edward’s story about ‘settling’; a fitting topic of concern for this final story.

‘Settling’

So the role of the outgoing coordinator has been to keep me in check with what we need to do – she says ‘we’re in motion with this, if we change things too much now, we’re going to throw the students’. She talks a lot about settling: ‘my role as a course coordinator is to settle students’. And the tension for me has been I know I get a lot of ideas on how to design or redesign - I’m an ideas person and I’m creative. But my weakness in that is almost having too much leeway. Sometimes I need someone to go ‘great idea. Let’s talk about it in six months’ or ‘let’s just do this’.

So yes we could change things in the future and improve etcetera, but there’s a tension I think between – and I know as I’m getting older that’s just me, I need to be aware of that. So that’s the flip side. I feel like a strength of mine is creative thinking and designing new things but the flip side, the weakness where that can be unhelpful for people, is doing that

too quickly - that can be unsettling. You can actually take the rug away from people.

(Edward, Story 2)

Phenomenally, the rule of breaking is shown in this story - albeit privatively - in the motion of 'settling'. We might appreciate here a necessary tempering of the forces of breaking, for without tempering, breaking would be exhausting, and might undermine the possibility of learning. Here, Edward's urge to break is held in check by the outgoing coordinator who understands the long game. Yes, she sees with her *long eye open* what is 'really' in play. Now, we are not looking for the lively gestures of learning in the lived event of the lesson but rely on a more capacious understanding of being in the mode of higher education, as part of a long and continuous becoming. (But before we forge ahead - look again at Edward's story and you might notice another one of those strange onto-logical parallels: Edward's personal-professional concern with settling his urges echoes the story's own concern with settling the students. Like the coordinator says, it is not just the course that is in motion, but "*we're in motion with this*" too.)

An educator's long eye is wise, and sees and accepts the binaries, paradoxes and contradictions within the work of learning design. Here is a mode of breaking which is like a breaking-through to a 'next order' of one's being 'in'. - A fractal mode of breaking, perhaps? In this mode I see myself seeing, and I see myself in motion - holding tensions, breaking rules, letting things settle in different kinds of involvements, in different ways, in different situations, and at different orders. What is a rule here, is a law there. What is for breaking here, is for preserving there. What is for asking here, is for knowing there. In this story, the outgoing coordinator is like a conscience for Edward, and her judicious presence in the story seems to make a backdrop for Edward's own self-awareness; for when Edward says "*that's just me, I need to be aware of that*", he opens his own long eye. So there seem to be two forces in play: one is capricious, and one is capacious.

Jaspers' thoughts on *exception and authority* (1938/1971, pp. 44-53) might give us some philosophical purchase here, as this pairing of notions are temporal in nature. Jaspers' 'authority' is the past speaking into the present, encompassing what can be known without breaking it. Like the 'rug' in Edward's story, authority lets us take things for granted and move with a measure of certainty - a necessary common ground when we are working with others. However, authority is *bound to break*, because, as Jaspers says, authority is constantly in

tension, and accordingly, constantly in motion. Authority's tension is strung between its longing to settle its terrible freedom through structure, and at the same time, its longing to recreate itself anew, by breaking out of every fixed form. Either one of these urges let loose without the other would either strangle out life or wreak havoc. Exception, then, is needed in concert with authority, to check and recreate authority afresh; conversely, authority is needed to ground exception momentarily in a truth. Exception is a mode of breaking that has the authority to break, as it were, and authority is like the lesson of the law which gives anew through its enduringness. A truly ironic philosophical dialectic!

We can recognise authority and exception as necessary tensional forces in our work. In both learning and learning design "the contents of authority come alive to the extent that he makes them his own" (Jaspers, 1938/1971, p. 48). Edward shows us this when he *takes as his own* the authority of the outgoing coordinator. Similarly, the student can take the authority of the teacher as their own. And, because Edward has made this authority his own, the authority becomes a freedom – and disappears into his being, just like learning and breaking do. Yes, what authority 'is' is never fully transparent and remains for each of us an "embodied riddle" (p. 50) – a riddle to be *lived*. Slowly, and over time, an individual – a teacher or a student - "actualizes his own origin in his own thinking and his own experience" (p. 48). Likewise, it is for each individual to discover exception for themselves. If we think we know it, says Jaspers, we do not: exceptionality can only be perceived by its truthful impact on us. So you see, the pairing of authority and exception advances on transcendence by permitting the tension to persist, and thus providing "room for new break-throughs" (p. 52). Together, authority and exception point to truth – but try to set upon them as you might a path, warns Jaspers, and you miss the point entirely.

One should not fall into the trap of imagining that authority and exception might tumble over themselves, as if accumulating in gradual maturity. Rather, this existential recreation is always in a state of partial and perpetual decay, too. If there is an order, it is an order rooted "rooted in what has once broken out of order" (Jaspers, 1938/1971, p. 48). Yes, breaking and order give each other to be – how else might new orders break through arise but from a kind of wobbly asymmetry (Bohm, 1968, p. 141)? - And the whole shebang, according to the process ontology doyen Alfred North Whitehead (1927-1928/1985), belongs ultimately to a universe inheriting itself in an infinite arriving:

What is required, is something much more complex. It is order entering upon novelty; so that the massiveness of order does not degenerate into mere repetition; and so that the novelty is always reflected upon a background of system. But the two elements must not really be disjoined. It belongs to the goodness of the world, that its settled order should deal tenderly with the faint discordant light of the dawn of another age. (p. 339)

Yes, settling and discordance belong together, in some larger sense. I think we know, deep down in our bones, that we cannot obviate the ‘long’ responsibility of the terrible freedom of being human with temporary comforts of knowledge, technique, or sureties (Jaspers, 1938/1971, p. 61). Anyway – humans are creatures who love rules, just so we can break them. We refuse to close; we are “full of light and invisible night together”, to take a leaf from Parmenides (in Coxon, 2009, fragment 11 / p. 88).

Daybreak. I open my eye. I wake and find myself already in the midst of breaking. I think - all this is mine. Whatever it is, I possess it, occupy it, and I am occupied by it. But all that Day brings fades in the Day too; it disappears in luminosity. I must sleep, and wake, and break again to find it again. I must put it outside myself to once again possess it. I turn in my bones / the gods of irony guide me from behind.

Remarks in closing

Three modes of breaking are in sympathetic tumult now, animating a new understanding of what it might mean to be in learning design: the profound and ineffable existential breaking which is manifest in my terrible longing for the cracks and the edges; the transformative urgency of the forces of learning which I find myself addressed by, am already involved with, and feel bound to; and the figure of freedom which is inherent tensional reality of design itself, that I open to with my long eye. These three modes of breaking belong together - and make each other stronger, do they not?

But it is impossible to finish a chapter like this – there is so much more to say: the gift of breaking, which being in learning design taught me, is an endless arrival - it opens the space for itself to come into. The rule of breaking is the last rule, without end.

Refusal to close

Freedom breaks: I am that wave
rising into the space that I also am
destroying that space that I also am
- so I can rise *again*, for nothing but the joy of it.

From the abyss to the abyss, in terrible bliss:
is this the ever-forming, ever-breaking rule of freedom?

Ten: Intimacies in practice

During the night I went out into the forest where the moon seemed to be making solid bars of light; the trees were like empty spaces in between. It was as if I wanted to make of myself some sort of offering on this grid, this riddle; for all the pain and chances and wonder of the world; for what might be possible. I thought – Then something may remain on the surface and something may fall through transmuted, on to another level.

- Nicholas Mosley, *Hopeful Monsters*

So here we are, near the end. We have looked together into the hidden world of a very personal learning design and seen there, in its folds and seams, strange but familiar onto-existential involvements. Even so, there is nowhere to 'arrive' at, except to say: there is something to be said about the non-arrival of all this. You see, I am beginning to understand that 'being' will always be in the blind spot; that learning will keep disappearing into being; that 'design' will keep hiding in our involvements; and that being in learning design will stay tangled with teaching. I understand too that there will always be 'more' than we can know or say - and that it is these enigmata of existence that keep life lively. And if so, the question that haunts this project now turns from one concerned with *showing* the essential hiddenness of being in learning design to somehow *preserving* the intimacies in such a way as they can speak their goodness into practice. Why? So that we might more deliberately nurture and vouchsafe this soulful inner work against the hollow ascendancy of any kind of learning design that does not stop to ask about its own depth and meaningfulness.

First, gathering the threads

It is not easy to explicate a phenomenon which has the quality of being hidden in our work. Whatever I am able to say about the intimacies of being in learning design is due to the slowing and deepening effect of being 'in' the research so thoroughly and so long; and I had time to hermeneutically return to new assumptions as well as old ones. I had time to do what Jaspers recommends (1932/1970b): to listen to the forces within me (pp. 134-135). Any success I have had in then communicating the unsayable fruits of this inner work I attribute to

my doggedness in finding an authentic writing voice; a voice that honoured the conversational, multi-layered and multi-hued nature of the enquiry, and that showed 'the way of finding' as much as its contents - no, further: that let the way of saying of the findings be part of the content of the findings.

Yet for all this internal conversation and its presence in the text I was writing, I felt I did my day job in a kind of *practice silence*. I was living the schism. The deeper I went with my enquiry, the deeper became the schism, too, because at the same time as I was plunging deeply into human ways of being, as if in some parallel anti-reality to my own, the university was ratcheting up into its next order of managerialism. My teaching work evaporated like mist in that dawning Day, and I was – am still - worried that the 'we' I had so tentatively but determinedly invoked in my methodology was now, in my lived reality, a relic of our former belonging together. My thesis writing became a refuge from what was increasingly banal, even deleterious in my work as a professional learning designer. I felt like I was keeping a secret, for although I was comfortable talking openly about the methodology, I found it difficult to talk about the content of my thesis. Why? Because what was given to me, and what I was beginning to understand, felt to me like it was *given in confidence*. When I did speak tokens of these intimacies aloud to others, I did so selectively, slipping them into the flow of conversation. The findings seemed at home in those more intimate settings; they did not seem to like being proclaimed (they are against proclaiming) - yes, it was in the intimate manner in which these findings appeared for me, was also the manner best suited to their being shared with others. Looking back, those snatched moments with colleagues were powerful indeed - like wormholes to another dimension, they seemed to open 'vastly'. I cannot claim that what I said I was overly profound, but the intimacy of the moment certainly seemed to be. I know this, phenomenologically, because of the small silence that followed in the wake of the words, within which, I like to think, some private trueness or moreness was glimpsed. By this tender and sacred filament, I kept a link between my two worlds alive until such time as I could contemplate their more fulsome re-entanglement.

Little stitches of the soul...

So - to the question in question, "how does learning design as such show itself to be?". Between the showings and the shadows, I feel I can now say that to be in learning design is to stay involved with learning; to ask with one's actions what and where is learning; to feel out

what is truly for the sake of the self in the cracks and at the bleeding edge of being; to follow the forces back to their origin; to ply the question for its gifts and the lesson for its law; to play with breaking; to be deeply bound and to deeply transcend, part of both the upwelling 'moreness' and the abysmal nothingness at once. More succinctly: *being in learning design is an onto-existential custodial involvement with what is 'learning', in which we try to save learning from disappearing into being by staying involved with its appearance and disappearance in and with our own being.* The inner workings of the question, a conscience of learning, the forces of learning, and the rule of breaking are the motifs that remind me what I had once had no words for, and what I now dare not lose.

Have I sufficiently addressed the research question? Perhaps, but only insofar as a hermeneutic question can be put to rest. Rather, I come into a state of rest with restlessness. After all, as I have learned from Jaspers (2003), there is no bottom to the question, there is no end to the question, and every answer just becomes another question – human enquiring is inexhaustible, and in any case, it is not the answer but the question that is essential (p. 12). And, as it turns out, the question itself is preserved in the findings as an essential working part of learning design - the findings hold themselves open.

As I went about addressing the overarching research question, the research sub-questions, in turn, never stopped addressing me. While the research question worked hard to stay with the phenomenon in question, the sub-questions explored the tangled undergrowth. The first of these, "*how does 'design' figure in learning design?*" plagued me, coming in and out of relevancy. But in the end, what started as a hunch came into form: I saw that design supplied the 'as such-ness' of learning design that distinguished it from its context of teaching. Nevertheless I remained cautious and conceded it often, because design revealed itself as something that hides, in two senses: 1) design can cover up another thing – in this case, it can stand in front of being; and 2) design is silent about this covering up - design *hides its hiding*. No wonder I couldn't see it when I first began to look! Design philosophy literature showed me how it hides – and it was as if the veils fell. I saw that to be consciously involved with design is an exercise of responsible freedom, a mode of being-in-one's-doing in the world which is conscientiously and constantly renewing the world, the one who designs, and itself. I found too that this basic human mode of 'being in design' is inseparable from its lived practice context – which in this case is university teaching and learning. Now, I had a way of

seeing and saying the design part of learning design, as the 'figure of freedom' in one's teaching - a fitting description replete with design's intrinsic, exquisite irony, its internally-held tensions... the way it figures constraints within freedoms, and freedoms with constraints, in an endless dance of open-and-closed.

This in turn speaks to the next sub-question "*how is learning design distinct from teaching?*". In this I learned that learning design is that part of teaching that is concerned with the appearance and disappearance of learning in being. Yes, learning design occurs in situations, but it is also and at the same time an affair with learning *as such*, and as such, learning design's feelers are for what exceeds the event of teaching: for the very lesson in the lesson itself, perhaps. A lesson (so the lesson taught me!) seems to be some kind of quantum of learning which gives itself into experience but is not itself absorbed into being along with learning. For the teacher and the student, a lesson stays in view and *keeps on giving*. Yes, there is something about the notion of 'the lesson' that carries a new phenomenal invitation for me; it is my own 'looming next'.

The sub-question "*what does it mean, to 'be in' learning design?*" served to keep me methodologically anchored in my own lived experience of the phenomenon. After all, I did not take time off my work to write about this work; every day I was both writing philosophically about 'being' in learning design and engaged in the 'doing' of learning design. I discovered too that I could stay faithful to both my own experience and the stories told to me by academics by taking these stories with me into my world and making them my own, as it were.

Along the way I learned that the next sub-question, "*how will I know the phenomenon when it appears?*", whilst a methodological question, cannot, in the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology, be separated from its contents: the phenomenon shows itself in the manner of itself. It is as if the methodology has itself disappeared into my being and irreversibly transformed the way I see and understand – now, it is impossible for me *not* to see that being in learning design is itself phenomenal and hermeneutic in nature. I learned too about the power of irony to show the exquisite existential contradictions that seem to mark powerful phenomena, and I deployed a novel 'ironic reduction', the only reduction properly befitting a hermeneutic phenomenology.

As for the research sub-question “*what does all this mean for practice?*”, I have held this silent “so what?” in abeyance until now, though of course it has haunted every page and every day of my project. Unconventionally, then, this question is addressed not through the research itself but through my response to the research. It is with humility that I now approach this most difficult task.

Time for a *loved* reality

Thus far, I have avoided the onto-existential complication of technology in the interpretation of the phenomenon of being in learning design. But of course, it is there; and due to the pressures of COVID-19 on university operations, ‘going online’ is unavoidably part of our lived higher education reality. However, I pause now in front of this incredible moment in time not to retrospectively knit it in to the phenomenon, but to stand in awe at the strange gift that this moment is bringing to the research task, in which the buried human-to-human relational aspects of the higher education endeavour are now rising *at scale* to the surface of our work: we are involved in an uncommon renewal of the contiguous matrices of a common caring. Here with us now is a glimpse of a higher education where *being’s* time has come; a time in which, because of the existential grounding we have been served by fate,

ways of being are primary; knowing serves being. This understanding points the way to a different quest; a quest marked by questioning instead of answering. ... If this human question is positioned at the heart of education, it highlights being as the driving force.

(Peters et al., 2020, p. 11)

It is almost as if – dare I think it! – the personal is now the dominant reality we are working with. What was hidden has become our vital business. Now, the challenge is to marry the personal and the institutional worlds for their meritorious co-benefit and to sustain the goodness.

But can we trust what we see? My sense is that the institution of the university has already begun to cunningly appropriate the personal into its design, enframing us as blind subjects to a ‘false personal’. The new enframing, if it continues, will be almost impossible to spot, let alone speak against, because it speaks to that which we crave in our work, under the cover of ‘need’. So even while something true and good is showing through into this new world of higher education, we are all of us nonetheless necessarily caught in a powerful net of

institutional technologies that are helping us to do what needs to be done – what *must* be done to ‘survive’ and to progress the business of higher education. Yes, even as we collectively seek out and take this timely technological advice into our teaching practice, there is a sense that we are nonetheless *deferring*; deferring in both senses of the word at once: we are momentarily relinquishing our own judgements by asking what it is we should do right now. Some of this newness may turn out to be wonderful after all, but now more than ever before, we should take care not to lose sight of what these utilitarian ‘solutions’ overwhelm - which is *the intrinsic goodness of struggle itself*. It is as if the technological and relational forces of this crisis are “doing battle at a deeper stratum of existence” (Jaspers, 1957b, p. 846). The struggle is played out in every conversation about quality, every financial decision, and every appointment of priority. But the struggle is not ‘over there’; these are *our* forces doing battle in us, and for each us this is our struggle to have and to be involved in together. So too the question of how to be and what to do is ours to ask. Indeed, the whole situation is a question that is right now *asking us to ask* what it is that is being asked of us (Biesta, in Peters et al., 2020, p. 30).

What is going on is not trivial. This ‘crisis’ is literally, etymologically, as Biesta (2020) points out, a ‘turning point’. How will we stand to turn? We cannot turn back, but we can turn to one another, and we can turn within. I wonder - is the pandemic ‘pivot’ on one level a turning of the onto-existential kind? Can I hope for this? Why not? Such a utopia is feasible, explains Barnett (2018), because the elements that make it possible already exist, even though they do not cohere holistically. There is a sense in which collectively, in the breaking of our former structures, we have sighted something in the work of teaching and learning that is real and enduring - the “good in the world that is worth preserving” (Hodgson et al., 2017, p. 18). Did we see something which *already existed*, that cannot be cultivated, managed or designed? Is this why, in the midst of those frenzied first weeks of emergency learning design, a colleague whispered to me in an email “*I secretly love it*”? Yes, I thought, why not speak of love? We have a lived reality that we can call experience, but we have a *loved reality* to care for too, something ‘at heart’ that is worth defending and worth the struggle; and now, we get to bring it right into our work.

‘Nurture the saving powers’

As the screw of a calculative higher education tightens to contain the crisis, the schism between its managed narrative and our lived and loved reality intensifies. The concealing enframement of an institutional learning design reaches a tipping point – for each of us a different point – whereby the concealment itself can no longer be unseen. Ultimately, the narrative betrays itself as the cover-up that it is - just by being too sure of itself. The designs on us are, at some point, just too obvious, and they grate on our bones. At this point, our design eye is opened, never again to shut. With our design eyes open, even as we prudently go along with the institutional designs on us for the sake of getting by, we will already be, on one level, ‘saving’ what we love from concealment, simply because we know, privately, that there is ‘more’ to our work than what appears on the surface. We preserve and defend what has depth and meaningfulness with our very being, as it were. And, when we save depth and meaningfulness from disappearing, we also *save what is important about education* from disappearing, and so preserve the conditions for our learning design work alongside its contents. And further - when we save the depth as personal, we personally deliver education from becoming “a meaningless ritual that must be tolerated” (Greene, 1992, p. 37); a ritual in which educators find themselves alienated in their own home, as it were, personally bereft of education’s promise. It is not reasonable to administer the rituals of education without oneself partaking in the spirit of learning.

The time has come for different ways of seeing and saying our higher education work, including our learning design work. We need ways that are less a performance of knowing what to do, more a genuine *I-know-not-what*; less method, more methodology - more attending to how we attend. We need ways to speak learning design in its unmediated and undesigned form, so that we can work with it at its proper, human, difficult depths. Institutional learning design, as a field of professional practice, is unlikely to abandon its mantras any time soon – in fact now that it is intractably hitched to technology, it seems to be digging in, surer than ever about its role in the business of the university. Nonetheless, because learning design is a form of design that is lived and living in one’s individual practice, it cannot be entirely managed, and remains authentically entangled in its context of teaching. As such, the utopian seeds for a more direct, involved, phenomenological and hermeneutical kind of teaching are already with us. The publication of *The Phenomenological Heart of*

Teaching and Learning (Greenberg et al., 2019) tells us that something is brewing that is more than individual voices. The principles for a phenomenological approach put forward in this book speak not to claiming but to *holding open*: being oneself open, encouraging openness in others, and opening to the moment (pp. 55-60). Might the quality of our learning design work also draw its inspiration and substance from the same fresh air?

New thinking about how higher education does not need to be an intervention. Why not stay with what is good and showing itself to us anew and let ourselves be advanced by an increased *weightiness*, rather than caught up in gratuitous vectors and endless transformation? Staying with what is already going on may be one way of nurturing the 'saving power' of enframement's alternatives (Hodge, 2015, p. 37) – actually, the aesthetic of *saving* itself acts as a counterforce to needless change, for saving makes it possible for a thing to be free in its own essence or presence, as Heidegger says (1954/1971, p. 148). Saving is always a deliberate act (Wheeler, 2014, p. 48). We might not know 'what' it is we save, but we save unconditionally: Night and Day together; shadows, possibilities, unsayable depths too. When we save resolutely, we guard against an inauthentic surety, and defend what is real.

But one must take care. In introducing force against force – even a saving force – we inflame the schism, and bring its energy right into the sphere of our personal experience. There is a danger that we end up doing violence to ourselves. I can bear witness to that in my own work. As I see more and more clearly what matters to me about learning and about the custodial conditions for my work, I bring what opposes my work into greater relief. This is painful. It feels as if the more I am able to see and say my inner, deepest, most loved reality, the more I leave myself open to being 'corrected' by my colleagues, the makers and keepers of the rules of learning design. If I do risk to bring to bear in my work what astonishes or intrigues me, it is quickly subsumed into a more generalised banality. It must fit into the template! But the real violence of the lived schism is not the struggle, which may in fact bring me before myself, but the way it brings me into a mode of saying '*they*', which dismembers me - it robs me of my institutional citizenship (Nørgård & Bengtsen, 2016). Heidegger calls this mode *the they* (Heidegger, 1927/2010, p. 122), a mode in which, as Harman (2007) explains,

Everything original and deep gets treated as something obvious and well-known. In Heidegger's words, "every secret loses its force." Anything gained by strenuous effort is converted into a superficial object of manipulation, publicity, and marketing. The they is always right, because it never gets to the heart of the matter and so never risks being wrong. Whatever happens, the they knew it all in advance. The they is never surprised by anything. (p. 67)

Against this stultifying state the schism itself might be a saving power, if we can bear its violence.

The institution might turn a blind eye to the schism to avoid stirring up conflict within its membership (Barnett & Bengtson, 2018, p. 6), but an individual is free to look the schism in the eye. And, if we look with our long eye of design, we own the whole struggle and make it our business, enacting a designful responsible stewardship for how things ought to be (Akama, 2015; Banathy, 2008; van der Ryn & Cowan, 2007). As those involved with learning, we can also enact an educational stewardship (Gillespie, 2003; Greene, 1992; Tribe, 2002) by teaching the way we think education 'ought to be'. In learning design, these two custodianships speak into each other's spheres and make each other stronger. Furthermore, for the doctoral researcher, there is the stewardship of the discipline itself (Barnacle, 2018; Golde & Walker, 2006); even, the deeply considered ushering in of a wiser, more trans-disciplinary world (Barnett, 2021). – Yes: and that is why, at the confluence of these three responsibilities, I feel there is something important to be seen, said, and saved. If indeed we are each of us in our own unique ways custodians of education's depths and meaningfulness, then it stands that our responsibility does not depend on the institution that employs us for its legitimacy or enactment, but on something more fundamental. Custodianship runs deeper than its practical applications; perhaps it is even, by a Heideggerian understanding, what human beings are called for in this world (von Eckartsberg & Valle, 1981, p. 308): to be here, and with our very being here exchange earth and sky, gods and mortals (Heidegger, 1954/1971). But go too far in this direction, and custodianship itself becomes a trap for human hubris. To enact a truly responsible custodianship in higher education we must call on the complementary saving power of sincerity and humility - indeed, 'human' and 'humble' share an etymological root in 'earth'.

We can never know what comes of our designing, anyway (Irwin, 2004; Pearson, 2008), and a stance of humility and sincerity saves us, in our learning design work, from

wreaking change without due caution. In designing we can be tempted to make demands on the way things 'are' – to 'force' learning, for instance, rather than work *with* the forces of learning as they break in us. Approached more quietly, from principles of care (Brown, 2015), our designing itself becomes a form of nurturing. To work in the mode of sincerity and humility means that while I cannot be sure of anything, I can at least be entirely honest about not being sure of anything: *of this alone I am sure* (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 37). The saving powers of sincerity and humility can be cultivated in our learning design work as deep questions; that is, questions which have no answers (Palmer, 1998/9, p. 8); transcendent, enduring questions which keep 'more' in view and so hold out against surety (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 70). Yes, ironically, the big questions are the ones with humility in their folds. Even everyday moments can be occasions for depth and meaningfulness when we ask these stewarding kinds of questions. Small acts like this are fiduciary acts of educational care; they are within our control, and they are ours to make.

A practice of learning design

Approaching learning design as 'practice' gives it its own place to land – it 'saves' it as such, and thus makes it possible for it to be free. What I mean by practice is a sustained, deliberate care for 'the way' of our doing. But I think it is also more than this: practice is ontological, because by being deliberate, I bring my being into my doing. And, since a practice is always my own, and draws from my own font, all that I do within its ambit – even the mundane and routine parts of my work – stands to be irradiated with personal meaningfulness. In this way, in the mode of practice, I invest my work with the power to *move me back*. Even if I feel there is no meaningful 'content' in my work at present, what is meaningful to me is that I attune to the world this way – and actually it is precisely this, holds Segal (2015, p. 3), that makes my work a practice. As a practitioner I make an affirmation of my labour: I am drawn to the task of being all that I can be, here and now (Jaspers, 1938/1971, p. 93), and I *want* to make myself a part of the working situation (Schön, 1983, p. 163) - including all that is difficult about it.

There is 'moreness' in practice: larger spheres contain us, my work and I. In the mode of practice, the present limits of my work are but passages - and it is myself that I pass on the way in and out of my practice. Segal and Jankelson (2016) write that in practice I come 'face

to face' with myself (p. xvii) – or I might glimpse myself in the spaces *between* my being and my doing (Churchman & King, 2009; van Manen, 2007). Either way, a practice is not a practice without that 'oneself' is present somehow, whether felt to be in it, nearby, or absent - an 'ought' only. Indeed, it is the sense of self (or sense of loss of self) in one's work that can show us where we might find 'practice' in our work. As my colleague Jane observed, her work is present to her as learning design as such "where I've got a sense of self come into it" (J. Haggis, 2015, personal communication, May 14, 2015). The self is the locus of practice.

Being in learning design as practice, the long eye of learning design is wide open. It looks inward at the self, outward at the world, and sees all of the comings and goings of situations as a constant infolding of learning. Taking the perspective of learning design as a practice of teaching calms the expectation of 'knowing what to do' and replaces it with a heightened self-awareness in one's doing. In this sense one's learning design work can be both 'practice' and 'practise' at once (Akama, 2012; Schön, 1983) where, though being aware of one's awareness in this way, awareness is deepened and expanded (Akama, 2012, p. 7). In practice, I am aware of all that my practice is *not*, too, of the seen and unseen in my work; I am, as it were, *awake in the dark*. Greene (1992, p. 7) explains it this way: that in being aware of my seeing, I am also aware of its partiality.

Practicing learning design, then, is in the first place, a professional and pedagogical exercise in deliberate and sustained *noticing* (Mason, 2002; Rooney & Boud, 2019): I might notice the situations that contain me, the designs I am in that are shaping my own, what seems to have life and force, what I love, when I am drawn or moved, when I find myself caught up in a struggle, when I do not know or cannot say what I know, what astonishes me, what I refuse. With my long eye open I might begin to see – but only ever partially! - how the affairs and industry of higher education are my affairs too, and deeply part of my work. If I then care to drop into a next order of noticing - that is, if I deepen my noticing - I might become aware of the undercurrents of my work: my bond, my terrible freedom, what I dare not lose, my unconditional actions – in other words, *my inner work*. I might notice too, how *all* this, on every plane, plays into the way that I teach and learn.

I might make a further turn, too: if I communicate and share what I notice with others, I open my work beyond my own experience and give others an opening to come face to face with the presence and absence of depth and meaningfulness in their own work. Yes, I make a

practice of my work by speaking it aloud. By virtuous return my own practice is enriched, because through the effort of attempting to communicate more than the mechanics of my work, what I wanted to say all along but had no words for becomes apparent to me; and even if I still cannot really say what I mean, attempting the task is an act of professional generosity.

Nurturing a few alternatives

Learning design is intimate work, but it is also public work, on display and scrutinised by coordinators, administrators, colleagues - and of course students, who are involved in our designs. Arguably, then, as practitioners and professionals, we are responsible for finding a way to talk about our work. As higher educators concerned about the conditions for our work, we can speak up for what lies beneath, as a form of stewardship for a richer reality. But the question arises: on what grounds can we see, say and save the inexplicable nature of our learning design work as such? I offer for your consideration some practicable alternatives to the *status quo* of doing learning design. These three alternatives may be humble, but they are powerful enough to be counterforce to the instrumentality of higher education, and nurture new ways of being in our practice; they are *speaking the philosophic, holding open a space for less, and disclosing design*.

Speaking the philosophic

In the same way we let our philosophies of teaching be unashamedly personal and unique (Kanuka et al., 2013), we might, without anyone's permission, nurture a more philosophic register for our learning design work. Spoken philosophically, learning design can more easily be the friend of the hidden and the ineffable, and artfully hold open the *I-know-not-what*, and its deeper essences - such as those disclosed in this thesis - can find a natural home in our everyday practice. We can deliberately nurture the philosophic in this kind of work, not as a technique or a method, but as a stance or approach. Philosophy need not be lofty, for it is already unspokenly present in all that we do -

Philosophies underlie our thinking; our social and personal existence; our innovation; and, ultimately, the solutions and the actions we undertake to address the challenges we face collectively and individually. (Konstantinou & Müller, 2016, p. 3)

Indeed, the philosophic is surprisingly practical, for it helps us to speak the undercurrents in our practice, which otherwise have no words. It also helps to open taken-for-granted aspects of practice afresh. For instance, when spoken in the register of the philosophic, a notion like 'quality' becomes much more interesting – it is as if it grows a new depth dimension that invites our involvement. We might then ask not just about the metrics and performances of quality, but about what quality *means* to us, how it *appears* to us, and how it *moves* us when we encounter its unsayable depths in our lived experience.

In the philosophic register I am less disposed to defending a position and can drop into a deeper mode of engagement; I can shift my perspective - my "standpoint and level", says Heidegger (1935-36/1967, p. 2). For instance I can, with a shift, pause to penetrate the goings-on with an intention to discern its enframements, shadows and absences. Or, I can view the goings-on with a long eye. This kind of super-attention enriches both the *contents* of my learning design work in hand and at the same time the *conditions* in which I work and take my perspectives, and as such the philosophic approach can enact a kind of responsible criticality which strengthens and renews my work (Galle, 2002; Konstantinou & Müller, 2016). Nonetheless care must be taken, because while the philosophic approach might itself give strength, it does so by staying weak and withdrawing from making any claims – indeed it must keep itself weak if it is to speak back against the insults of a too-arrogant naming and claiming. As Peter Sloterdijk (2006) astutely points out, one's response *must* be different to that which one opposes, for "only as a tranquil theory of movement, only as a quiet theory of loud mobilization can a critique of modernity be different from that which is criticized - everything else is the rational makeup of complicity" (p. 42). Yes, in a milieu of violent self-assertions, the earnest gentleness of a philosophic approach is perhaps the most unquieting response of all.

We need only regard the presence of discomfort and difficulty in our work to understand the practical relief that a philosophic approach might bring. When I am philosophically holding open, the appearance of difficulty is not something I feel compelled to overcome; rather, I am grateful, for its appearance tells me that I am emerging into a deeper engagement or understanding with my work (Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2015; Fisher, 2011; Segal, 2015). Embracing this, my work becomes charged with 'moreness'. I might even deliberately and transgressively *turn towards difficulty* by asking difficult questions about my work – the

‘why’ as well as the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of it (Trede, 2016, p. 223). Difficulty is then transformed from what thwarts my work, to what gives my work back to me as practice. After all, it is the lively disparities between plan and outcome that save my work from being purely mechanical (Jaspers, 1932/1970a, p. 133). Of course, we might feel drawn to seek out a few securities, and oftentimes, realistically, we are not disposed towards difficulty. Exhausted by the struggle, I might rather “befog myself [and] yield obeisance” (Jaspers, 1932/1970b, p. 79), conceding the struggle – for today - as a form of self-preservation. Mostly, I take my ease where I can find it, on the path of least resistance, led along by my habits practice (Dall’Alba, 2009a) and dealing with complex things just enough to get by on (Van Note Chism & Sanders, 1986). But if I sidestep the difficult altogether, my work will be dead for me, reduced to box-ticking and rubber-stamping (Sloan & Bowe, 2015) – it will be merely an exercise in conformity. Then, I will find myself in a design situation in which what is truly configured is not the possibility of learning, but my compliance. But even this twilight can be borne philosophically, if it must.

Holding open a space for less

Sincerity, humility, love, difficulty, stewarding, the depth-sounding practices of the philosophic: these intimacies of practice would barely register with those who advocate the orderly efficiencies of learning design as a means to an end. But these strange powers, I believe with all my heart, are precisely what nurture the deep-down fruits that we long for in our work, and we should nurture them in return. To do this, we have to think differently about where these kinds of approaches fit in to our working contexts. If there is no institutional home for these notions, perhaps this homelessness, this no-place – literally a “utopia”! – might itself be the very place of their belonging?

I am suggesting that we can radically open our learning design work by finding a conceptual home in ‘space’. We need only appropriate the idea of *design space* from the professional design vernacular and give it a philosophical twist. In design parlance, a design space indicates the scope of concerns and possibilities within a design project: what is in and what is out. The same approach can apply in education - for instance, it is reasonable to think of the curriculum as a space (Tribe, 2015, p. 20). Accordingly, I can think of the ‘space’ of my learning design as a proxy or reminder that this work, in my teaching, is about *holding open*; holding open for the appearance of learning – and who knows what else! Yes, one does not

know what will come of holding open, but being open to the idea of holding open, we are already holding open, are we not?

Paradoxically, holding open an educative space is, in some respects, a creative act of withholding. There is a case for *less design*. We have already been told not to over-stuff the curriculum – should we not also pare back the work of trying to manage and direct the experience of learning? Teaching, points out Barnett (2020), can easily perpetrate a ‘tacit consumerism’ by “supplying students with ready-made materials and experiences” (p. 8), leaving little to the imagination - and no working room for the arrival of the forces of breaking which we frustrate by rolling out neat packages of learning. Designing for less at face value goes against the tenets of productivity and the expectations of our colleagues - and our students, who expect their institutions to provide (they are our ‘customers’ after all, in the contemporary university paradigm). Like us, students live in a world where instantaneous ready-made experiences are *de rigueur*. Should we not strive to give them what they expect to get? I would like to make a case for the negative on this point, for we are already living and learning in an already design-saturated world bursting at the seams with educational things ready-made for consumption. What might an alternative ‘figure of freedom’ look like here?

As higher educators we might, from within this educational cacophony, carve out a quieter space and pursue with our learning designs something altogether *less* like what we would expect to find – *and therefore more in the spirit of learning*. Yes, we might deliberately deploy *less* design, and in doing so speak back against an education which, just like a genetically mutated crop enslaved to its chemicals, promises a disingenuous and unnatural strength? Might we pursue instead, as Biesta (2015a) encourages us, “the slow way, the difficult way, the frustrating way... the weak way” (p.3)?

The call to make education strong, secure, predictable, and risk-free is an expression of this impatience. But it is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of what education is about and a fundamental misunderstanding of what makes education “work.” It sees the weakness of education—the fact that there will never be a perfect match between educational “input” and “output”—only as a defect, only as something that needs to be addressed and overcome. (p. 3)

Thinking about our learning design work as space for less disrupts paradigms of efficacious technicism and gives it a way for education be ‘properly’ weak.

Instead of trying to direct learning as if it were ours to control, what if we saw our learning design as a philosophical commitment to educative openness? In this alternative, my spacious designing is without means and ends: it does not aim for anything, so it cannot be instrumental; it cannot be structured or constructed, so it saves itself from being vain; and it is without ground, so it saves itself from becoming bogged down in the theoretical. It is truly free! In real terms, the only 'thing' that I might sincerely design is that which preserves my designing as a figure of freedom. Yes, I put it to you that holding open our learning design as space for less is a way to keep our lived and living work innocent - 'innocent', because etymologically, this means 'not death' - and safeguard instead what is *originally lively* in our work from its own designful self-corruptions. Nurturing innocence in our learning design means that if we are to preserve the possibility of a genuine 'undesigned design' rooted in its deeper onto-existential layers, we must be wise to the designs that bear in on both the conditions and content of our design work. It is ironic, is it not, that in losing my design naïveté I preserve my design work's innocence. What might that innocence lend to the possibility of learning? In this precious space carved out from the usual world, with no means and no end, is it possible that students might encounter a truly *original learning* – one that is pre-construction, and pre-institutional (Magrini, 2014) – truly their own figure of freedom?

Disclosing design

The third and last alternative for learning design practice arising from the findings of this research is simply *disclosing design*. We can disclose it in our teaching and our syllabus as an act of educative humility and authenticity – and, indeed, as an act of radical education. Why keep the way of our work hidden? Just as metacognition gives the experience of learning back to the learner, so too we can give the design of learning back to the experience of learning. If we needed a rationale, we could argue that this disclosive move meets or even exceeds the 'meta' educational objectives of the employability or graduate kind. And, where matters of design are part of the curricula mix, as they are across any discipline, disclosing design in one's teaching directly addresses the content of the curriculum itself. What we are disclosing alongside the content of the design is the presence of design *as such*.

Incorporating the disclosure of design into our teaching, we pass on the gift of seeing the designs we are already in. Disclosing design, we disclose human ways of being, including the shadows and hidden realms of being human and how all this configures a world. A design,

ordinarily, is a *fait accompli* which gives “no hint of the things we do not or cannot know” (Orr, 2002, p. 136). But a design like this is not conducive to an encounterful and disclosive learning. Why go to all the trouble of designing a lesson that serves only to fulfil itself its own pre-configured outcomes? The only learning we can be sure of here is that we as teachers have learned the rules of properly structuring a lesson. Alternatively: in disclosing the intimacies of our labours – that is, the difficulties, choices and convictions - that are so much part of the way of the lesson, we open to *all* that the lesson is, including what it is not. At the same time, we open ourselves most sincerely - and thus, *we serve learning most sincerely*.

We should be bold in defending a less designed, more self-disclosing space for learning. If we were bold enough, we could break the design on purpose - ironically, designing its non-design! We can do this simply by dropping our guard, and instead, resolutely standing together *with* the students before learning’s own laws in an ‘educational state of suspension’ (Lewis & Friedrich, 2016). In that uncommon common spaciousness,

... a new kind of freedom can be sensed, a new kind of education explored, a new common manifest, which belongs to no one and resists all forms of regulation and assessment beyond its own appearance. (p. 248)

An education like this is transcendent, and it cannot be designed as such. It can, however, be set free to come into itself - that is, ‘saved’, in Heideggerian terms. How? We can vest in our learning designs the responsibility of *figuring freedom*, both philosophically, and in concrete designful action. Thus, rather than pre-figuring education with design, we ‘give’ design its own being, and ask it to speak openly and actively in our work as a lived-and-living aspect of education.

As educators, we are free to disclose design in the events and affairs of learning. I would go so far as to say that we are obliged to disclose it. In this powerful alternative to enframement, we can choose to reveal the schism, the struggle, the difficulties of our designing *in* our designs, even offering them *as* our designs. We cannot be more sincere than this, and we cannot be more pedagogically generous than this; for, in declaring ourselves, the so-called experts, to be always learning, we de-fictionalise a summit which the student will always fall short of. Our designing, turned inside-out, ‘undesigns’ the camouflage of the university agenda.

Holding open our designing in our teaching is perhaps the most intimate act of all. It is like teaching naked. It is without guile or guise; such a practice gives itself innocently, exactly *as it is*: a difficult love affair with learning.

.....

It is not fitting for me to conclude all this holding open with a recipe for practice – I fold experience into practice with rules for breaking, not imposing - but I can break the rule of breaking, too. So here is my innermost hope for action, since I have the floor:

First, deliberately hold open the zone of I-know-not-what by refusing all constructions. Then, surface your assumptions about what is learning, and refuse them too. In their place, install a space for a question of what is learning; that is, provoke in your own situations, and in the context of your discipline, an original encounter with learning, by simply noticing carefully what appears for you. Let yourself be moved and astonished. Before the encounter disappears, honour it by explicating it in your philosophy of teaching. But do not get attached. Play with it, follow its forces, and let it break. Bring your intimate encounter of what is learning into your practice but hold it lightly, so that it might belong to and enliven everyone that comes into contact with it, colleagues and students alike. Likewise, gather up the traces of learning after the event of teaching, and preserve them as sacred filaments so they can give again. Notice the tensions between your lived and your loved reality. Is there difficulty here? – turn towards what troubles you, and become educatively involved with its address. On every occasion that you remember to, ask yourself where is depth and meaningfulness. Whether these aspects of your learning design work are present or missing today, you have regained them with your question, and they are yours to see, say, and save. Always keep one design eye open in the dark. Stay involved.

“The rest is silence...”

The contents of the research findings are startling and affirming, but they are just a hint of the moreness that attends our learning design work. What has shown for me, at this time, may not show for you, and I should not, and cannot, conjure or confect abstracted generalisations for application into wider practice from the insights of these particular findings. It simply does not work that way. I cannot, you see, beg the workings of the question

on your behalf, supplicate of you a conscience of learning, describe the forces of learning in your experience, or foretell if, when or how breaking will come to pass. And yet – *and yet*: I truly hope and believe that these things of depth and meaningfulness that have appeared for me also belong in some way to us all. Perhaps the more transcendent insight of the research is that learning design can and does give itself originally – that is, *as such* – to each of us in our own way, if we care to attend to the nature of its giving.

I longed to go ‘deep’ but I feel like I have barely scratched the surface. All I have really done in this regard is discover that there is *more*. I intend to keep researching the hidden worlds of work and learning, and I hope that others feel similarly inclined. There is much yet that can be enquired about, and the tendrils of new questions are already curling into my practice. Nevertheless, on reaching the end of this tome, I feel I have come full circle, and that is satisfying to me, academically. Professionally, I feel exhausted, as if I have been keeping a secret to myself, and I hope that its release into the scholarly conversation does not offend anyone, but enlivens new thought.

On my gloomy days I wonder if I have written an exit thesis of sorts, or a kind of love letter to the past. But I had a sense from the start that, in a way that I did not yet understand, this project was for me *an act of love and reclamation*, even while the ‘what’ of it remained in shadow. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the order that I found in all this was all my own: my soul’s irreducible, unfathomable, exquisitely unique order. On another level, I hope that just by daring to say the unsayable, I have opened a crack for Rilke’s (1995) ‘winds of homecoming’, whose airy currents carry spirit in their folds (Palmer, 1998/9; Barnett, 2007), to enter into the corridors of the institution.

What is it, to be in learning design? Little surges, small returns, human-sized tides, the delays and decays of daily being all attend the work of it. But underneath all this, the deep cosmic roar of an educative existential is always breaking over me, and I know that my work is but an homage to *that which cannot be possessed*. I am grateful to the wave for the adventure of its breaking, but I am indebted to the undertow that is constantly drawing me home.

Might I leave a little something in my wake? Will you join me? If these asseverations ring true, please speak them into the commons, and start new conversations about learning

design in higher education, conversations in which our 'being' is not forgotten in our 'doing'. Then, as Jaspers says, "let us go our way, without knowing the whole, without tangibly possessing the authentic, without letting false arguments or illusory experience provide us with a peephole" (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 125).

The roads to liberation are open, and have always been open. But there is no end to them, nor any permanent place of rest. We are granted insight and reflection – above all, we are granted action, the decisive fulfilment of the moment – but then we have to go on, and 'the rest is silence'. (Jaspers, 1962/1967, p. 285)

Yes - because I cannot know any of this, it may yet be true.

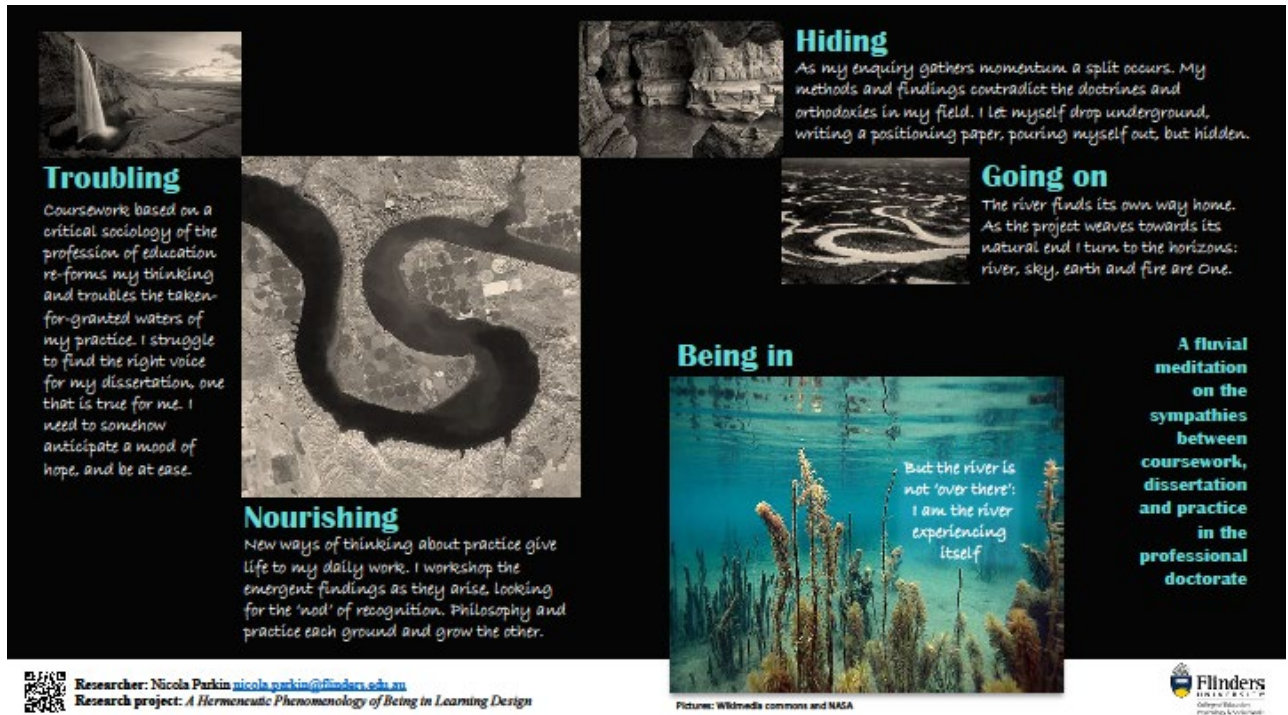
Three sacred fish

*My underground river is darkness itself, and movement
itself, and it roars in those places that are dark in me
too, that move in me too.*

*Its ancient tameless coursing harbours three sacred fish:
the wilful fish that swims its whole life against the
current just to stay alive; the blind fish, pupil of the
water, that hopes for the gift of knowing water itself
and so unknowingly knows it; and the fish that can
never be named / is not even a fish / may not even exist.*

Appendices

Appendix A: 'Fluvial meditations' poster



Title:

A fluvial meditation on the sympathies between coursework, dissertation and practice in the professional doctorate.

Abstract:

This poster illustrates three aspects of the Doctor of Education: the coursework components, the dissertation, and the practice context, and explores through fluvial metaphors their entangled relations, motions and influences. As a student 'in' the professional doctorate, the poster is a chance to bring my experience into view: subterranean, braided, oxbow and otherwise.

See expandable version here: <https://eportfolio.flinders.edu.au/view/view.php?id=27875>

Appendix B: Example post from *Research Ramblings* blog

Sunday, 24 July 2016 | Designs have life!

Designs have life. The design leaves the designers hands and moves out into life.. it takes on a life of its own. The design is made *to be itself, to exist, to live*. Good designs have life (Alexander) - they are complete enough of themselves to *be*. Bad designs wither before they can breathe, or worse, they take life.

Satisfaction in designing is the sense that you brought a design into being, somehow complete in itself, even when it is designed to be 'open'. The design can now live in the hands of anyone (this makes it different to a work of creative art). It is a thing *of itself* that inhabits things (this makes it different from a plan, which is superseded by the manifestation of the plan).

Maybe some non-formal designers (everyday designers like teachers) resist designing because they feel that the design will take their (teaching) life and trap it in the design, taking it away from them. (actually this is the case when you are paid to design a topic that you don't teach). Maybe equally, some teachers feel excited by designing because they can see that their teaching life is able to *live on* in the design. And if you teach what you have designed you get to experience the life of the design, you are part of it. How does this feel? What is the nature of this?

Design, if it is done well, holds open a space for more life, rather than closing it down. In educational design, it holds open a space for learning, rather than closing learning down around the objectives and assessments. It is also *life-giving*. It breathes, it is loose.

An awesome designing experience feels like you are encountering the design - it has a possibility-of-life of its own which becomes available to you... it has a faint life, but you can see it. You breathe life into it, yes... it lives.

That *designs have life* extends the idea that good designs have character and personality - they are an 'ultimate particular' (Stolterman). Also see ontological design.

I have been here before - designs 'exist'. I am in the grey emergent area... where the phenomenon of design is showing itself to me... I get glimpses. Is it too contrived or is it

'true'? It is somewhere between - a hunch. A thread...

What bothers me is I was trying to get away from 'design' itself being the phenomenon... rather than *designing*, the human experience. But here I am again. Of course both are present: the design does not exist (yet?) without the designer designing. But my gaze is on design itself. If I turn to the designer, I am full of existentials. If I turn to designing, I am full of process.

What am I looking at here?

Appendix C: Letter of introduction



School of Education
Flinders University of South Australia
GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001
Tel: 08 8201 2441
eduinfo@flinders.edu.au
<http://www.flinders.edu.au/ehi/education/>
CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

16 September 2016

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear potential participant

This letter is to introduce Nicola Parkin who is a Doctor of Education student in the School of Education at Flinders University. She will produce her staff/student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity.

Nicola is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of academic educators' lived experiences in educational design, called *A hermeneutic phenomenology of designing, in the context of university educators' educational design practice ("Experiences of everyday designing")* in which the everyday designing experiences of academic university educators are explored, in order to better understand how these practices occur.

Nicola would like to invite you to assist with this project by agreeing to be involved in an interview which covers certain aspects of this topic, through either a face-to-face or remote interview.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Since she intends to make a voice or video recording of the interview, Nicola will seek your consent using a copy of the attached Consent Form to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription of the recording in preparing her thesis, reports or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed. The recording will not be made available to any other person other than her supervisors.

(cont.)

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on 8201 2266 or e-mail michael.bell@flinders.edu.au .

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Bell', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Michael Bell

Senior Lecturer, School of Education

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 7174). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Appendix D: Research information sheet



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RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

A hermeneutic phenomenology of designing, in the context of university educators' educational design practice ("Experiences of everyday designing")

Description of the research project

This research project explores tertiary-level learning design from the perspective of the experience of designing, specifically, the experiences of academic educators (e. g. university lecturers) everyday, ordinary designing experiences.

The study is grounded in the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology, which is an interpretive research methodology that looks afresh at what is taken for granted, or hard to see. The methods centre on the collection of concrete experiences, their crafting into coherent stories, and the exploration of the themes arising, and their implications for practice.

The research has been independently conceived by the researcher, and is auspiced by Flinders University through the School of Education. The research is unfunded, and is not linked to any program or project.

Criteria for participating

The study is seeking to interview academics who self-identify as having recent everyday experiences of designing in educational contexts.

In order to better differentiate the research/professional context for the researcher, academic educators currently working at Flinders University will not be eligible to participate.

The following explanations unpack key terms used to delineate eligibility:

Academic educator: An academic from any discipline area working for a higher education institution whose role includes purposeful development of teaching and learning activities and their environments.

Everyday designing: In this study, ‘designing’ means any form of curriculum, learning and instructional design activities concerned.

Specifically, ‘everyday designing’ is about the everyday contexts of designing, the ‘natural’ processes of designing as determined by the academic-as-designer, as opposed to participation within an institutionally-driven ‘imposed’ design mode that may be more formalised, standardised, or procedure-driven. ‘Everyday’ then refers to the business-as-usual, integrated nature of designing within the academic’s routine contexts, and may include elements of both individual and shared design activity. It is likely to include a variety of modes and styles of practicing over time.

Recent experience: ‘Recent’ is intended to be subjectively interpreted, but is included here as an element of the criteria because participants are asked to recollect experiences in more detail, and those details may be easier to recall if in recent memory.

Up to 12 academic educators will be interviewed.

Recruitment – snowball sampling

This study uses the using ‘snowball’ sampling method, where participants, after they have been interviewed, are asked to forward the research information documents to colleagues who may also be interested in participating. The researcher will not know who has received the information unless and until contacted by the interested party.

The interview process

Participants will be asked to commit to one interview lasting 1 - 1.5 hours, to occur at a mutually agreed time and location. The interview may be face-to-face or remotely conducted, using video conferencing software (like Skype) convenient to both parties.

In the interview, I will be asking to hear stories about concrete and actual experiences of designing. The interview is semi-structured and informal.

If video conferencing software is used to conduct the interview, the video will be captured on-screen by the researcher using a screen capture program. The audio or video recording is then transcribed, and a copy of the transcript returned to the participants for verification.

Expected benefits

By better understanding the nature of academic educators’ everyday designing, this research aims to inform design-related practice within higher education contexts.

Dissemination of the findings

The researcher intends to publish formatively as themes arise through analysis, and, in keeping with the methodology, will also seek opportunities to share emerging ideas and implications for practice

with the higher education community through presentation at conferences and symposia, as appropriate.

Informed consent

Participants who agree to be interviewed will be asked to sign a consent form at the time of the interview. Participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time, even after the interview has taken place. Any data already collected will be withdrawn from the final publication of the thesis. Please note however that interim publications and presentations may have already disseminated findings associated with this data.

Outside of the research team, anonymity and confidentiality of participants is assured. The audio files and transcripts will be securely stored within password-protected drives at Flinders University.

How to register your interest

If you would like to volunteer to participate, or to discuss the study further, please contact the research supervisors or myself using the contacts provided below.

Research team personnel

Primary researcher: Nicola Parkin nicola.parkin@flinders.edu.au (08) 8201 5337 or 0417 005 011

Supervisors:

Primary supervisor: Dr. Michael Bell michael.bell@flinders.edu.au

Secondary supervisor: Professor David Giles david.giles@flinders.edu.au

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 7174). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

Appendix E: Consent form



CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH by interview

A hermeneutic phenomenology of designing, in the context of university educators' educational design practice
(*"Experiences of everyday designing"*)

I

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Information Sheet, for the research project

on(date of interview)

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to audio/video recording of my information and participation.
4. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
5. I understand that:
 - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
 - I may ask that the recording be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

Participant's signature.....**Date**.....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name.....

Researcher's signature.....**Date**.....

Appendix F: Approved recruitment email text

(Attachments: Letter of Introduction, Research Information Sheet, Consent form)

Dear academic educator

I introduce researcher Nicola Parkin, who is completing doctoral research with the Flinders University School of Education under supervision from myself and Professor David Giles. Nicola is researching *academic educators' everyday experiences of designing* within a university teaching context. The aim of the inquiry is to offer new understandings of designing in this space.

This email is an open invitation to participate in the research by sharing your experiences of designing in an informal interview at your convenience. The study aims to gather and analyse up to 60 storied experiences of designing of at least 12 educators across universities in Australia.

Eligibility

Nicola would like to interview staff who self-identify their own designing practice as a *normal and integrated part of their role as an educator*.

- **Academic educator:** An academic from any discipline area working for a higher education institution whose role includes purposeful development of teaching and learning activities and their environments.
- **Everyday designing:** In this study, 'designing' means any form of curriculum, learning and instructional design activities concerned.

Specifically, 'everyday designing' is about the everyday contexts of designing, the 'natural' processes of designing as determined by the academic-as-designer, as opposed to participation within an institutionally-driven 'imposed' design mode that may be more formalised, standardised, or procedure-driven. 'Everyday' then refers to the business-as-usual, integrated nature of designing within the academic's routine contexts, and may include

elements of both individual and shared design activity. It is likely to include a variety of modes and styles of practicing over time.

- **Reasonably recent experience:** This is intended to be subjectively interpreted, but is included here as an element of the criteria because participants are asked to recollect experiences in more detail, and those details may be easier to recall if in recent memory.
- **Exclusion:** In order to better differentiate the research/professional context for the researcher, unfortunately academic educators currently working at Flinders University will not be eligible to participate.

Please see the attached Information Sheet and Letter of Introduction for more details.

If you think you might be eligible and are interested in participating, please contact Nicola directly – nicola.parkin@flinders.edu.au

The recruitment method for this research project is snowball sampling. We thank you in advance for forwarding on this email and its attachments to any of your colleagues whom you think might be interested.

Warm regards,

Michael

Dr Michael Bell

Coordinator - Educational Leadership and Management

School of Education

Flinders University

Phone: +61 8 8201 2266

Mailing Address:

GPO Box 2100

Adelaide, South Australia 5001

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 7174). For more information regarding ethical

approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au



Disclaimer: This email and any attachments may be confidential. If you are not the intended recipient, please inform the sender by reply email and delete all copies of this message.

Appendix G: First understandings

Teachers are already 'designing', by any name

I believe that 'teaching' involves thoughtfulness and care. The university teacher must find their own way with the curriculum, and work from and with their own concerns, while at the same time considering the practical constraints and parameters, and the particulars of the given situation within its temporal and context and locale. Teachers draw on their experience and the experiences of others to make judgements within this mix, which is always shifting. The teacher is always looking behind, ahead and to the side in order to find the best fit for the moment, as they go along with their teaching. This process of constantly bringing these elements into balance is what I understand as 'designing', whatever it name it may go by. In this way teachers are 'everyday' or lay designers, effectively designing whether they are conscious of it or not, though I hold that an awareness of the process enhances the process.

Teachers design 'experiences' / design manipulates

Learning is experiential, and so is teaching. When teachers work on curricula, activities, resources, and strategies, they are actually designing *experiences* for students, for themselves and for other teachers. In this sense then, *human experience* is the 'material' of designing in the educational context.

Teachers are also 'end users' of their designs / design is 'for'

In design domains outside of the educational context the role of the designer is characteristically to design *for others* – along the supply chain, this typically includes the manufacturer, the marketer, and the retailer, the purchaser, and ultimately, the 'end user'. Think of fashion design: the end user in the production line is the wearer of the clothes themselves. In the lexicon of design, teachers design educational experiences *for* students as end users – but they are themselves also 'in' the experience with the student: they are also end users. *So, as well as designing the experience, teachers also experience the design.* They design *for themselves* too.

Teachers are in a cycle of designing / design improves

Teachers are typically in a position to continuously redesign those experiences they are teaching, *staying with the design* as it plays out over the years. As their designs come to pass and they 'live' it with the students they are in a position to understand their design better and

improve it for the next delivery. Each cycle of design moves the design on, and so the design is always improving.

Design is towards the future but it happens 'now' / design has an end point

The teacher imagines the future educational experience and tries to bring it about through her design. The present moment of designing reaches towards the future when it will come about: it is a bridge that joins the now to the end point – the point of experience, and beyond – the impacts of that educational experience in the lives of the students, which cannot be quantified. The teaching designs 'towards' this imagined future state, the end point of her design. The teacher has this end point in mind when she is designing. In a way the teacher works backwards from the future to the present to draw the design as a bridge from here to there.

Design is towards some 'thing' in particular / design divides

The intention of the design is to bring about an experience *of a particular kind*. It has specificity; it is differentiated from other kinds of experiences.

Design hides itself in the designed 'thing' / design remains

In the same way that the design of the saucepan is inherent 'in' the saucepan, the design of the educational experience is 'in' the experience itself. The design is hidden, however, to all but the designer themselves. To the student, for instance, as the end user of the design, they will have an educational experience brought about by design, not a *design* experience. The design is invisible - until it does not work well; then, it can be seen as a flawed design.

A design can be good or bad / design has a value

I am not normally one to label things 'good' or 'bad' and yet in my work I find myself appraising a design, or more accurately, the quality of the thought that is going into the designing. Some appear to me to be better than others. However I understand that much of the design is hidden from view. When I see an online unit site or an assessment plan I only have what is immediately in front of me to judge it on. I know that what I cannot see is also 'there', part of the design, but not visible to me. For instance, the online site cannot tell me the story of the activities that occur in the classroom.

There can be too much design, or not enough / design has quantity

If there is a quality of a design or of the thinking of designing, then perhaps there is a *quantity* of it too. I have seen that a design can be over-thought or over-worked, perhaps trying too hard to be clever - and wound so tightly that it chokes itself. I call this 'over-designed'. 'Too much' design results in educational experiences that have no room to breathe or move. *Not enough* design, on the other hand, can result in a 'slack' learning or teaching experience which feels lazy and under-considered. Think of the lecture-tutorial pattern so common in the university setting (still). It is part of the university tradition, and is usually by habit rather than design that it continues in this way. Its own design – the lecture as a considered way of engaging educationally - is long forgotten; what remains is a routine. *Is it possible to not design at all?*

Appendix H: Extract from *Researcher goes first*

12 Oct 2015. Michael Bell interviews Nicci using proposal version interview questions

Analysis applied: Types of dialogue are coded:

- **Grey highlight** = usable account of 'experience'
- **Bold** = providing context
- Times New Roman = reflective text
- Underlined = abstracted, universalised





...So onto another one, a different story. Um, it's a design experience that really stood out for you. Something that made an impression...

Yeah. Um, ok, so... (pause) well, **a few weeks ago, I've been meeting weekly with um, Grant, to work on his.... So we're working on a pattern for his course, and we're working on a pattern in the sense that each topic will have the same sort of structure. And this is something I've kind of been talking about for a while and ...I've been really interested in this, and Grant was wonderful, because he was allowing me to lead him down this pattern path, he was engaged in the whole idea,** and he actually., there was a meeting that we had, and he was talking about something that I could not understand what he was saying, it was as if I had missed the point completely, and we were almost like we were having two separate conversations, and all of a sudden I saw what it what was that he meant,. Oh no and there was a third person there that's right. And this person could obviously see the bit that we were joining up about. And offered it. And all of a sudden I could see and I was so excited, and I said ooh! I can see what you're talking about now, I get what you are talking about, and I was so excited because it was all of a sudden, all the work that id been doing, and all the thinking that he'd been doing, had this shared structure now, and it all came tumbling in like this (gestures) bang bang bang bang bang bang bang bang bang. It was wonderful! It was like it was this kind of, event that happed. And um, so I quickly, so we captured that, on the board or something,... oh no, that's right, I had a diagram that I had been working from and scribbling on over the weeks. So I madly scribbled all over that and kind of captured all of that. And... um, (pause) its connected to the next meeting that we had. So I went away and I sort of diagrammed that and I captured that as cleanly and neatly as possible, and I brought that back, and I had... because I knew the ground we were sharing I felt confident to take a step on my own as well so I took a step on my own as well, and I took it to the nth degree with the patterns. I pushed it as far as I could. And we came up with a generic – I – came up with a generic assessment pattern, that's kind of what he was talking about but I just called it that, and extended that to generic learning outcome areas as well. And we came up with this – I came up with kind of grid that could be used across every topic, so that was part of the pattern. And ... um... **what was lovely, and the thing that stood out for me was I was really nervous actually,** I took it to him, I took it to the meeting and I said, does this kind of describe what we were talking about last time, and he said yes, yes, that isn't exactly what I meant but I

like that better, lets go with that, I get that, it's simple. And so we're going with it, and all of a sudden were just going with it, and I hadn't expected that, because it was just an idle idea, it was a ... (sighs) actually it was massive for me. I went home and talked about it afterwards, because what happened was, there were some things that had been kind of rising to the surface for me that were really important that I wasn't seeing in peoples topics, which was about attention to the person, and not just the content, but the person learning the content, and how we can put that in the middle. And so, I did these generic learning outcome areas to kind of include that. And, um it was really really important to me. And the other thing that I included in this generic learning outcomes areas was attention to the future and caring about the future. And I thought, he'll just, he'll say, what's that?! And he did! And he said, what that? And so I explained it to him and he got it, and he said, that's really important, and I just thought, oh my god, thank you so much, it is really important, you're right, and I'm *glad* that you think so! (laughs) and so now were able to construct this curriculum around and including paying attention to those two generic learning outcome areas that are so important to me. I feel completely invested in that project now. And its like, really, I feel like, I can make a difference. Like it made me feel like *I* could make a difference. So much of the design work is service to somebody's... to somebody else. And all of a sudden I got to vision, just a tiny chink of a better world and out it in there. and I just felt so happy about that, it was just momentous for me. And it gave me actually courage to have more voice. With you know, these idle ideas. And that's the thing about the patterns actually, that once you've got the pattern you can then, it's something it's a half way thing that you can then share with other people and they can use that pattern as a starting point for their ideas. So I'm glad it's in the pattern. Yep.

Fantastic, good story.

Appendix I: Report on practice interviews

May 2015	October 2015	December 2015	February 2016 (to come)
			
<p>1</p> <p>INTERVIEWEE: Was someone I was very comfortable with, and was familiar with their design work</p> <p>PREPARATION: Once the interview was confirmed, I sent through the abstract from my early proposal version</p> <p>QUESTIONS: Were bent towards the universal. I didn't ask for examples or stories or instances. Semi-structured</p> <p>RESPONSES: Were wonderful, insightful, reflective – but yielded no concrete stories of experience</p> <p>RECORDING: iPhone</p> <p>ANALYSIS: Highlighted some interesting parts, but generally was lost with what I got... I could tell it wasn't <i>stories</i></p>	<p>2</p> <p>INTERVIEWEE: I was interviewed by my supervisor in order to experience the process, to test the approach, and to surface my own experiences</p> <p>PREPARATION: Gave my 'indicative question list' to supervisor a few days prior</p> <p>QUESTIONS: Series of questions that asked for stories of this and that – no logical flow and too structured</p> <p>RESPONSES: I was able to tell stories, but I was mindful not to 'cheat' and theorised wherever I could 😊</p> <p>RECORDING: iPhone</p> <p>ANALYSIS: 'Coded' the transcript to isolate sections of 'experience' without reflection, and was devastated to see not much at all.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>INTERVIEWEE: Was recommended but not known to me. I knew she was experienced with 'design'</p> <p>PREPARATION: Sent a basic outline only within the email, and asked her to bring an artefact as a focus</p> <p>QUESTIONS: No artefact produced, but a single design project was used as a focus for all responses</p> <p>RESPONSES: Were a mix of stories and universals. Very usable</p> <p>RECORDING: iPhone</p> <p>ANALYSIS: Transcribed only the relevant parts. Firstly, used comments to hone in on parts. Then, I crafted the stories into wholes, and saw that the glue of 'meaning' is necessary for the teller.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>INTERVIEWEE: Was selected from the Flinders staff list as someone unknown to me, belonging to a scientific type discipline, and male (all other pilots were female). No idea how he sits with 'design'</p> <p>PREPARATION: Sent a basic outline only within the email. Left wide open</p> <p>QUESTIONS: As indicated in my proposal, I will use the verbs (processes) of designing as a loose framework to elicit stories of actions</p> <p>RESPONSES: - to come!</p> <p>RECORDING: iPhone and Smart Pen – he and/or I can use the pen to sketch if needed – will be tied to a time mark on the recording.</p> <p>ANALYSIS: Will trial full process.</p>

Appendix J: Interview guide

For each interview:

Housekeeping

- Introduce self - make clear any links and differences between this research and my job
- Discuss what to expect in the interview
- How the stories will be used – outline of the methodology
- Where the data will be saved
- How confidentiality will be maintained
- Explain the 2 forms of recording and why (back up)
- Ask for any other concerns or questions about the process
- Sign 2 copies of the consent form
- Explain that I might need to gently bring the participant back to the concrete if they drift too far into the general or the theoretical

My assumptions: everyone has a different experience of designing / designing explains itself

Note participant profile: teaching context, relevant background

Start recording.

Indicative general question/areas for covering in the interview:

1. The fuzziness of what designing 'is' – what counts as 'designing' for you? – An example of this...
2. The everydayness of designing - How does designing figure in your life?
3. What are you working on right now? – where are you up to... and what's coming next?
4. The 'for-ness' of design – what is your current project 'for'?
5. Zoom in on a moment - when you were really 'in' the throes of designing...
6. Zoom in on a moment – when a design became clear for you...
7. Design as opening/closing – does this resonate? – give me an example of opening... and of closing

8. The relationship between the design and the actual teaching in action – what happens there?
9. Do you have a sense of relationship with the design – how do you invite it?
10. How does the design appear to you? (is it fully formed? Clear? In motion?)
11. What matters to you in designing / what will you pursue?

Prompts:

- Just one clear moment....
- Where are you? what is happening around you?
- Was there an actual experience when that became (strong/real) for you?
- Can you give me an example?
- How does that play out in your practice?
- Tell me more about that
- Colour that in for me a bit... what was it like for you?

Wrap-up:

- Feedback on the interview process itself
- Next steps – do you want to check the transcript

Appendix K: Story-crafting example – ‘The chatterboxes’

Transcript, with story-crafting shown:

~~And another idea that I use — that came from ‘ditch the textbook’ — was to use, and I don’t know what they’re called — you know these little things that you used to play with at school, and you ‘te te te’ and you lift up the thing and...~~

~~*With the paper?*~~

~~Yeah.. chatterboxes! Because my grandson — this is what it hit me, because my grandson was playing with chatterboxes and I thought ‘they’re so much fun!’ you know (laughs). And then looked when I was going through ‘ditch the textbook’ they said ‘use chatterbox for this this and this’.~~

I got to class one day. And we’d gone through the lecture and it took a lot longer than it actually should have and we had this whole thing to do ~~in the lecture~~ and I thought ‘oh god, how can we do that quickly and engaging’ because they were all really tired, because we had four-hour sessions. But we’ve got to cover this ~~this week~~. It was ~~like~~ ‘what are the eight environmental influences on a business?’ and I had the lecture slides. It would have taken me half an hour to go through each one. And I thought: ‘chatterboxes’ (laughs).

So I quickly downloaded the thing. I couldn’t make them (laughs) ~~and~~ [so] I said ‘who knows how to make a chatterbox?’ ‘oh yep-yep-yep’ .. and so we made these chatterboxes. What they had to do was put the question of - there was eight – perfect! – eight little questions and under one ~~they put ‘what is this’ so say~~ they put the column ‘this is the environmental influence’ [etcetera] and they put an explanation underneath.

~~And again, I could not believe it. This group of students who usually don’t even open up a textbook — because they had to look at their textbook to get the answers —make their chatterboxes, colouring them all in, going through the textbook, looking for the answers to put in their chatterbox... I took photos with my phone because I was just gobsmacked about how they just *into* it, and having *fun*, and that took like 20 minutes and — done! (laughs).~~

~~*That idea came to you at the time....*~~

~~At the time. But I drew on... remembered what my grandson was playing with, and remember it was in the 'ditch the textbook' thing so I thought 'yep, that's what we'll do, and we'll quickly do that' and quickly went to the computer and print one off.~~

~~That sounds to me like you're confident with your own style, you know you can do that, you can just improvise, even though it might be a little bit scary....~~

(13:00) Oh I was scared: I thought 'they're going to nnaahhh...' but they *didn't*, they just *embraced* it. [I could not believe it]. ~~I was telling my colleague afterwards, 'it worked so well' — I could just not get over how they were in the textbook, on their chatterboxes, in the textbook...~~[This group of students who usually don't even open up a textbook – because they had to look at their textbook to get the answers –make their chatterboxes, colouring them all in, going through the textbook, looking for the answers to put in their chatterbox... I took photos with my phone because I was just gobsmacked about how they just *into* it, and having *fun*, and that took like 20 minutes and – done! (laughs)]. It was just ... magic. ~~And then they used their chatterboxes to test each other! (laughs).~~

Initial interpretation

Description

This is a story of real-time designing in the classroom, where the teacher is alert to the moment, and is able to ask a question of the moment, and in doing so, to receive the answer.

Interpretation

The end of the class is drawing near and everyone is tired after nearly four hours of class, but there is material that needs to be introduced. In this situation a teacher might typically speed through the material, noting the key ideas and summarising, or hold over the new material until next class. In our story, the teacher sees the moment not for resignation or defeat, but for renewed activity and life. The teacher recognises the moment for its possibilities, and makes an appeal: "*I thought oh god, how can we do that quickly and engaging*". She appeals to herself as if reaching out for help.

She asks the question – *a design question* – inviting the design to come. We have seen this in other stories... the invitation to design. here, she *invites herself* to design, or invites the

design, the answer. In a way, she accompanies herself in the teaching/designing moment; her appeal is to 'god' – perhaps that existential which is always there, listening?

The design question perfectly captures the purpose and its parameters of the teaching moment. It discerns, immediately, the temporal and experiential dimensions that are needed for learning in the here-now. The question 'forms'... it gives shape. This is the teachers expertise: that she can bring together in one moment the room's mood, the practical constraints, the priorities, and the possibilities. She does not yet 'know' what to do, but she 'knows' that *here-now* is a moment for a design question to be asked, and she 'knows' design question. The question is formed in a moment of not-knowing, but is itself a way of knowing. Knowing and not-knowing together, irreducible... ontological: *not/knowing*.

Perhaps, with her perfectly formed question, she appeals to that part of herself that *already knows what to do*, an always-with-me, already-there aspect of her being that accompanies her in her human form. She has but to pray, to ask the question, and the answer is already there. Why not? It appears so suddenly!

Or, perhaps with her perfectly formed question, the possibility space of *these dimensions exactly*, she creates a container that 'scoops up' the next moment, as if ploughing the possibility space before her as she goes. There is a sense that this is designing: not to 'know' the answer, what to do – but to 'know' the question – that there is a question here-now, and to form it / let it form. The flow of what 'is' (taken-for-granted in her teaching) is, in this moment, arrested *and* propelled by not/knowing. Upon asking the question, the 'answer' comes as sudden inspiration: "*I thought: 'chatterboxes'!*". The answer is effortless... it just comes... like water flowing into a receptacle: one has but to form the receptacle, the receptive container.

Something strikes me in the telling of this story – the use of the word 'cover' to describe the getting-through of material in the classroom. What does it mean to 'cover' material by teaching? Is it not perhaps, *uncovered* instead?

If she had planned the chatterbox activity, she may have been tempted to 'cover' that too! But her spontaneous activity creation was not part of a plan, and therefore, not to be 'covered'. Could be that the teacher, in her teaching, 'covers' what is *already* there, but uncovers what is (seemingly) *not* there?

Appendix L: My interpretive techniques, lodged

- Listening and noticing when transcribing – jotting down what I notice
- Forming ‘new wholes’ – crafting the story as a part which is also a whole
- Gazing softly at the whole... and holding it close but loosely, bringing it into orbit
- The discipline of writing the description – see Josh’s! This is difficult
- Asking a question of the story ... reading ‘through’ the words
- What is the question the story asks?
- Pulling out the ‘windows’ – small words and phrases
- Wandering between the story, the description, the parts as windows, and the ‘held’ whole
- Using questions to lead the thinking
- Stretching out the fabric of the writing – seeing the leaps, and separating them into a flow
- Untangling and loosening my thoughts, creating space, making it loose so you can see through it
- Attending to the spaces – what happens between ‘this’ and ‘this’?
- Letting the words write on... what do the fingers know when you let them go?
- There is ‘life’ ... what it is? it has its own presence, it shows itself, it meets me in the middle... the lurch in the stomach ... there is something ancient and remembered there, without words yet
- Reordering to feel its shape and flow between thoughts
- Allowing unfinishedness – keeping understanding open with questions
- Adding brackets to the title with the ‘finding’ – it shows the distance travelled from the story to the interpretation
- Staying receptive to the notions, even if they are early:
- As I was writing out these interpretations, the notion kept coming into view, insisting... so I put that down on paper too. I feel like there are two streams of understanding happening concurrently when I write... the interpreted stories, as they come, and something ‘bigger’ underneath, the notion I suppose... which is showing itself as if it was there all along. The notion seems to have a vacuum force that sucks in the interpretations as soon as they come out of me. It’s very interesting.
- Revisiting with fresh eyes: looking for things which jar or have faded. Building on what ‘gives’ again

Appendix M: Excerpts from *'Clearing the way'* reflective journal

EDUC9978 Reflective Journal

Nicola Parkin | Semester 2, 2018

8 Sept | Finding words

So I live with these showings. I cannot see them directly but I 'know' them by their character – I have a *felt sense* of them. Yet my job is to find the words to communicate what I 'know' – or at least, what seems to be 'there' for me / with me. Here I invoke Jaspers, who holds that the whole point of philosophy is to communicate 'man to man', "and in communication all its other aims are ultimately rooted: awareness of being, illumination through love, attainment of peace" (Jaspers, 1951/2003, p. 27). (For Jaspers, philosophy is approached phenomenologically; he *meditates* rather applying argument or logic. I find him completely enchanting.)

But here is something interesting – there are two motions in play. In the first, the phenomenon communicates *itself*, and I merely make myself available. I come into commune *with* the phenomenon, and this is the first communication; it is between us; it 'occurs' (etymologically, a meeting takes place). Then, a second motion ensues as I write the words, allowing the phenomenon to communicate itself to others through my words. I don't actually communicate it, but I write the words that allows it to communicate itself. When I get a nod, I know I have been as faithful to the phenomenon, as it showed itself to me, and in my words.

Sometimes – most of the time - words fail. Just trying to pin down a name for the phenomenal showings is driving me spare. I look for single words, and I try phrases and even whole sentences. I start with "I...". I use the third person. I avoid the stance altogether with passive voice. I delete, and delete and delete. (I don't think our language is made for phenomenological analysis. Only poets can find their way with it. I am not the first to notice this.)

Perhaps a poetic form of expression is called for? Take Jaspers' "passion for the night" - human hunger to break the rules – how wonderfully this is expressed!, boiled down not to its bones, but to its *flesh*. It is both mysterious and entirely self-announcing. It contains within its giving also what is hidden – the night – and so does not give itself away completely, but allows you to enter into its meaning by stealth, furtively, under cover.

9 Sept | The phenomenon's ways of giving

I wrote thousands of words yesterday and then realised (remembered?) something: that the phenomenon gives itself as 'ways'. It makes sense when you think of the phenomenon as an event, something motional. A *phenomenation*, recognised by the particular way that it manifests, by its 'ing'. Anyway realising this I deleted what I had written – and then promptly realised that I had already realised this *and written about this before*. So did I realise it as if for the first time, or remember it, as if returning to that thought? Am I just going over and over my tracks? Is the quality of my thought somehow richer each time I return? Does the repeat thought 'prove' the original thought? Or more worryingly, have I worn a groove for myself that has become for me the new taken-for-granted? Or perhaps, am I just old and forgetful.

I also spent some time yesterday worrying about *what* exactly I would concentrate on for this journaling exercise. I am, I suspect, spinning my wheels, circling the task; I can feel myself resisting. Why? It is the task itself: it looms above and before me: a wall of philosophy that I must read in order to find my way into the chapter. The hard part of the starting is knowing where to read – or should I say, *who* to read. I am currently reading Jaspers, but I know I have to seriously read Heidegger – and also Marion, who holds a key for me.

But two things need to be said about this not-starting. (This will occupy me for a bit!)

Firstly, phenomena cannot be contemplated without first contemplating 'what is a phenomenon?', in the process of which, one learns how to contemplate and also establishes (however transitorily) a starting point from which to proceed: *a language for communicating*. I bounce between writing this chapter and the showings chapters, mindful of the circularity and reciprocity, each informing and giving flesh to the other. What are phenomena *as such* must be understood phenomenologically – through the work of studying a phenomenon; otherwise, the understanding is second-hand, abstract, and likely to be false. In any case, it is

inauthentic to the task of phenomenology. Phenomena, it seems to me, are always surprising. And each quite themselves. So a generalisation cannot be made: just a sense of the 'way' that phenomena manifest through experience. The how, not the what, or should I say, the how *is* the what, in general terms.

Secondly, the phenomenon in question, 'being in design', shows through in any way it can: and being 'design' it infiltrates the methodology and 'the work' of the thesis as an artefact. In other words, the mode and manner of my *enquiry* is a work of design, and my *thesis* is a work of design: phenomena of 'learning' and phenomena of 'research design' co-mingle, confound and complicate the project.

There are aspects of design that no doubt are *common* across phenomena of design (for instance design hides, design insists), and sometimes I have a sense that I am looking at design *as such*, and sometimes, at 'learning' design *per se*. The general diverts me from the particular, and the particulars must be sorted into their place in the project. Hence, I am working with these forms of design too, and so always fiddling about with the shape and organisation of the thesis as a work, and backtracking over my understanding of the 'way' I am understanding, refining the enquiry itself.

14 Sept | Reading Heidegger obliquely

I know that *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1927/2010) is a core primary text for my interpretations, but I have put off plunging into it for so long now it feels strange to be finally there. I have dipped in and out, but I need to tackle it a bit more systematically now. I know that hiding in there somewhere are all manner of helpful ideas that I can use to elucidate the unsayable ways that the intimacies of being in design give themselves.

Anyway I plunge into *Being and Time sideways*, it feels. I don't approach directly, but through the margins. I have my first showing (notion, theme) in mind: the with-me-ness (how awkward - clearly as yet I cannot 'say' it yet). I am not yet sure as I plunge in, what I will find... I may recognise the stories in his notions, and so find myself entering into understanding through its 'parts', so to speak, or I might find some overall notion that seems to coherently capture the sense of it – something better than 'with-me'. Or I may not. What I seek might be elsewhere, in Marion, in Jaspers, Gadamer... there is a world of philosophy out there.

15 Sept | *Being and Time* shows thinking

I noticed last night when I was reading *Being and Time* that Heidegger's project was phenomenological. Maybe that sounds too obvious! But his writing is so obfuscating that it was easy to miss. His way of illuminating the phenomenon of 'being' was through a direct encounter with it, with *the way* that being shows itself to be. I can see that now, but still, his project, to capture being in the act – I wonder if it is self-cancelling? Too much thinking shows - what?: it shows *thinking*.

16 Sept | *Indra's net*

There is a sense of *scale* to the phenomenon. Sometimes it shows itself to be intimate, sometimes, as immense (and sometimes both – I am reminded of Gaston Bachelard's 'intimate immensity' (Bachelard, 1958/2014), a sort of 'inner vastness' which is the realm of being). Also there is a sense of *nested movement*, with each order of the phenomenon cascading 'out of' the others – or more accurately, *drawing in* to the others, of inversion, and collapse to the centre as a kind of deepening. In any case, the phenomenon is present at all 'orders' of scale and in its movements of coming out of, and drawing into itself. Like Indra's net, the Buddhist or Vedic metaphor (depending on your source) which communicates cosmologically the mutuality of existence and experience within a metaphysic of empty/fullness. Indra's net is made of jewels, each jewel reflecting all the other jewels by its facets. To enter *into* one jewel is to enter the whole in which all jewels exist, and where:

....every "dharma" or "quanta of experience" is contained within every other dharma, even as it contains every other dharma and in fact contains itself as contained within every other dharma. This is what is referred to in the Huayan literature as "mutual containment" and "mutual penetration" (Fox, 2013, p. 182)

...rather like the hermeneutic, expressed cosmologically, perhaps? *Fractal* is another way of grasping this notion; fractal also has scale and movement, is always opening, turning, and closing in on itself in all dimensions simultaneously, including the dimension of time, and goodness knows what others.

The illusion of separateness – and dimensions - is cast as a net. Each jewel is loosened from itself so that the universe might enjoy itself being. Since analysis means 'loosen apart' Indra's

net gives a way to understand the task of 'analysing' within the hermeneutic phenomenology enquiry.

Plunging in to the radiant net I make some 'loose' observations:

Each jewel shows the others, gives the others, contains the others, and is contained in the others. Each phenomenon is a jewel. The phenomenon shows itself *as a phenomenon*, with (jewel-like) distinctiveness; a *particular* thing whereby it is distinctive as *this* thing and not that thing. What is it 'about' this phenomenon that makes it this thing and not another thing?

Let us also say that the jewel has facets, each of which are also refracting and containing the whole. Each existential has *characteristic aspects* that communicate the human *experience* of the phenomenon, which show up recognisably in stories, and which can be interpreted and communicated philosophically. For example, *invitation*; there is always some kind of invitation. This characteristic aspect of the phenomenon has its own bounded wholeness.

Further: each human is existentially jewel-like in their own being. In realising this, I come to 'realise' the phenomenon inasmuch as I *make 'real'* the phenomenon *in me*. Here there is possibility of the ontological collapse: I phenomenate myself. Using the example of 'invitation', I invite myself; *I come towards myself in invitation*. I come to know the phenomenon, and at the same time, it ceases to 'be' in the sense of being ontologically distinct 'as' anything; 'it' recedes as something other. In being known through phenomenation, the phenomenon ceases to be 'other' than what I am already, and so at the same time, the phenomenon is nothing at all. It is not "a thing"; it is not distinct; it is not experienced as a thing sensorially separate from me, but is part of (my) being. At the same time, I realise that the phenomenon was always knowable. I *remember* it.

Yet the phenomenon 'exists' in this way: it is always unruly. Isn't it always hiding, breaking, receding, fading, morphing, inverting? Isn't it always giving – giving itself away?

16 Sept | Reading the index, resisting Heidegger

Having (again!) exhausted the meta ponderings so characteristic of this methodology (or is it just me!?), I can now try to again turn to the task of the analysis itself, and journaling the analysis.

Back to the *felt sense* of it, that is all I really have. And I do not even have that, not really. I wonder if I have made a false memory for myself, since I have been dwelling with this phenomenon so intimately for so long. It keeps becoming me, and in doing, disappearing from view. I keep stepping back, or trying to catch it unawares through some trick of forgetting... I know it only by the fact that I keep returning to it... even if I try to put my attention elsewhere (something more obvious, please! Something tangible and exciting for the reader please!, something that advances the project in terms of 'another way' please.) Listening to the Science Show yesterday while driving, a cosmologist was describing the 'Great Attractor' phenomenon – or was a theory? - in which we are all (the universe and everything) moving towards this unknown (unknowable?) 'X'. Being in hermeneutic phenomenology feels somewhat like that. A slipping back all the time.

It doesn't advance... it returns anew.

So this is the method – at last!!! Why not start at the end?

I start reading Being and Time through the index / glossary of terms (the 'lexicon'). I am scanning the collection of awesomely bizarre words (carefully) for any clues, any resonance, being at the same time *in close* and also *out wide* trying to get a 'map' of Heidegger's thinking through his terminology. When I am drawn in by a word, I turn to the pages that it is indexed to. (Interestingly, I keep finding myself on the same pages, arriving by way of different words. The great attractor at work!)

I notice that I feel somewhat irritated when I find I have landed in the realm of the everyday: the hammer, work, idle talk, etc. I am always looking for something *rare*. I am beginning to understand that it is precisely to address this kind of resistance to the everyday that Heidegger has directed his project; when we dismiss the everyday in our desire for the rare, for instance, then we miss our very Being in the process. Where am I to be found? In the everydayness of being (a little yawn comes). (Perhaps this is why I read Jaspers alongside Heidegger: Jaspers supplies the transcendent to Heidegger's being-in-the-world.)

In Being and Time, Heidegger's dogged and exacting deep dive in into how 'being' can be accessed seems to me to contradict my own felt sense of being. What I am trying to say cannot really be said without circularity and self-contradiction, but it feels like this: when you try too hard to nail it, you do violence to it. I suppose I am arguing for the mystery of being. I do not

feel the need to understand exactly the way that my being is manifest in existence or even to myself, but I am happy to receive it when it appears to me. Do I need to understand something to know it? No, I think perhaps the opposite might be truer for me, that when I let the being of being go, when I allow it to be, then, paradoxically, I feel to be closest to my own felt sense of being. Put another way, when I let being be, I know being in its unknowingness.

And so I find I am always resisting Heidegger. Also, I worry that the weakness in him that let him be Nazified is also somehow immanent in his philosophy. I don't know how to stand with this, except that: he is brilliant, and flawed, and *it is a shame*. Perhaps this is all it is. Heidegger himself writes of his shame in letters to Karl Jaspers in 1950, when he confesses that since 1933 he could not visit Jaspers' house, not because a "Jewish woman" lived there, but because he "simply was ashamed" (Trawny, in Trawny, 2016, p. 177).

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22 Oct | Reading Marion

Perhaps I can find some 'order' in Marion's treatise on phenomena *Being Given* (Marion, 2002). I had put off reading this seriously until I had finished with Heidegger, but picking it up again yesterday I got excited. Marion's writing is forceful, much like the 'saturated' phenomena he describes:

at a stroke [coup]: it leaves one speechless; it leaves one with no way to escape it; in the end, it leaves one without the choice either to refuse or to voluntarily accept it. Its accomplished fact cannot be discussed, or avoided, or decided..... Not only does the event give itself in itself... but it gives itself from itself and so as a self. (Marion, 2003, p. 98)

The phenomenon gains a life in Marion – there is urgency and mad love for existence. Let go! In givenness, 'give-in-ness'.

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