
'We must learn to...'

The Institutional Essence of Learning
as an Anthropocentric *Praxis*
following Heidegger

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Abstract*

This thesis begins from the belief that it is currently essential for us to relearn the essence of learning.

To commence this task, this thesis works with the assumption that the essence of learning lies in the way learning can be ontological, changing the essence of what is, and instituting a new ‘what is’. This thesis is thus an attempt to take account of the radical constructivism that is the unavoidable anthropocentrism of such essential learning.

The philosophical teachings of Martin Heidegger are brought to bear on this question concerning learning. This thesis suggests that on the one hand, the way in which Heidegger teaches, teaches us that learning is a process of instituting, a formative projection of necessities that metaleptically installs what is essential; on the other hand, what is thereby learned with and from Heidegger clarifies that this process of learning is a reflexively finitudinal *praxis*, a thingly effort that must be performed anew every time and can never be taken-as-finished.

This means that the ‘freedom’ to change the essence of ‘what is’ by learning is never merely available to us because essential learning involves making-necessary in a sustained manner over-and-against what currently has been learnt-as-necessary, that is, ‘what presently is’.[†]

This thesis therefore learns that learning is an avowed act of willing, but one which cannot and must not be represented as a technical economy under the control of a humanist subject. The latter misrepresentations can in fact be understood as manifestations of the current withdrawal of essential learning.

In the end, to try to capture what is being learned in this thesis, the process of essential learning is called ‘design’ as understood in relation to the current concern for sustainability.

* The condensed formulations of this abstract are explicitly elaborated in the Introduction.

† It will become apparent that throughout this thesis I use both forms of the past participle and substantive of the verb ‘to learn’, i.e., learned and learnt. There is a distinction here, which concerns the learning that is the essence of modern Technology, which will not be explained until late in Part Two of this thesis. This delay is itself an essential learning strategy.

Abbreviations

References are to the English translations of Heidegger's works, except where the original German is cited. If the German is in round brackets it has been supplied by the translator or commentator; where it is in square brackets, I have supplied it.

AF	"The Anaximander Fragment" trans. D.Krell & F.Capuzzi, in <i>Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy</i> San Francisco: Harper, 1984
AH	"Aletheia (Heraclitus, Fragment B 16) trans. D.Krell & F.Capuzzi, in <i>Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy</i> San Francisco: Harper, 1984
AM	<i>Artistotle's Metaphysics, 11-3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force</i> trans. W.Brogan & P.Warneke, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995
AWP	"The Age of the World Picture" trans. W.Lovitt, in <i>The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays</i> New York: Harper, 1977
BC	<i>Basic Concepts</i> trans. G.Aylesworth, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.
BDT	"Building Dwelling Thinking" trans. A.Hofstadter, in <i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i> New York: Harper, 1971
BPP	<i>The Basic Problems of Phenomenology</i> trans. A.Hofstadter, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982
BQP	<i>Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected 'Problems' of 'Logic'</i> trans R.Rojcewicz & A.Schuer, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994
BT	<i>Being and Time</i> trans. J.Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996
DL	"A Dialogue on Language" trans. P.Hertz, in <i>On the Way to Language</i> San Francisco: Harper, 1971
EC>	"On the Essence and Concept of >ε[ZΘ in Aristotle's <i>Physics B, I</i> " trans. T.Sheehan, in <i>Pathmarks</i> ed. W.McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998
EPT	"The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking" trans. J.Stambaugh, in <i>On Time and Being</i> New York: Harper, 1972
EPTT	"The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking" trans. J.Stambaugh, in <i>On Time and Being</i> New York: Harper, 1972

FCM	<i>The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude</i> trans. W.McNeill & N.Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995
FND	<i>Die Frage Nach Dem Ding</i> Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1962
GA5	<i>Holzwege</i> Gesamtausgabe v5, Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1977
GA9	<i>Wegmarken</i> Gesamtausgabe v9, Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976
GA26	<i>Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz</i> v26, Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1978
HCT	<i>History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena</i> trans. T.Kisiel Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985
HEP	“Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry” trans. D.Scott, in <i>Existence & Being</i> London: Vision, 1949
HHI	<i>Hölderlin’s Hymn ‘The Ister’</i> trans. W.McNeill & J.Davis, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996
HPS	<i>Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit</i> trans. P.Emad & K.Maly, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988
IWM	“Introduction to ‘What is Metaphysics’” trans. W.Kaufmann, in <i>Pathmarks</i> ed. W.McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998
KPM	<i>Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics</i> trans. R.Taft, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997
L	“Language” in <i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i> trans. A.Hofstadter, New York: Harper, 1971
LH	“Logos Heraclitis, Fragment B 50)” trans. D.Krell & F.Capuzzi, in <i>Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy</i> San Francisco: Harper, 1984
LoH	“Letter on Humanism” trans. F.Capuzzi, in <i>Pathmarks</i> ed. W.McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998
LP	“Language in the Poem” trans. P.Hertz, in <i>On the Way to Language</i> San Francisco: Harper, 1971
LR	“Preface [Letter to Father Richardson]” trans. W.Richardson, in W.Richardson <i>Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought</i> The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963
MA	“Memorial Address” in <i>Discourse on Thinking</i> trans. J.Anderson & E.Freund, New York: Harper, 1966
MFL	<i>The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic</i> trans. M.Heim, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984
MP	“Moira (Parmenides VIII, 34-41) trans. D.Krell & F.Capuzzi, in <i>Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy</i> San Francisco: Harper, 1984

MWP	“My Way to Phenomenology” trans. J.Stambaugh, in <i>On Time and Being</i> New York: Harper, 1972
NI	<i>Nietzsche</i> v1 Pfullingen: Neske, 1961
NII	<i>Nietzsche</i> v2 Pfullingen: Neske, 1961
N1	<i>Nietzsche Volume I: The Will to Power as Art</i> trans. D.Krell, San Francisco: Harper, 1991
N2	<i>Nietzsche Volume II: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same</i> trans. D.Krell, San Francisco: Harper, 1984
N3	<i>Nietzsche Volume III: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics</i> trans. J. Stambaugh, D. Krell & F. Capuzzi, San Francisco: Harper, 1987
N4	<i>Nietzsche Volume IV: Nihilism</i> trans. J.Stambaugh, D.Krell & F.Capuzzi, San Francisco: Harper, 1982
NL	“The Nature of Language” trans. P. Hertz, in <i>On the Way to Language</i> San Francisco: Harper, 1971
OEG	“On the Essence of Ground” trans. W.McNeill, in <i>Pathmarks</i> ed. W.McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998
OET	“On the Essence of Truth” trans. J.Sallis in <i>Pathmarks</i> ed. W.McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998
OQB	“On the Question of Being” trans. W.McNeill, in <i>Pathmarks</i> ed. W.McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998
OWA	“The Origin of the Work of Art” trans. A. Hofstadter, in <i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i> New York: Harper, 1971
P	<i>Parmenides</i> trans. A.Schuer & R.Rojcewicz, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992
PIA	“Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation” trans. M.Baur, <i>Man & World</i> v25 (1992)
PDT	“Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” trans. T.Sheehan, in <i>Pathmarks</i> ed. W. McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998
PR	<i>The Principle of Reason</i> trans. R.Lilly, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991
PT	“Phenomenology and Theology” trans. J.Hart & J.Maraldo, in <i>Pathmarks</i> ed. W. McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998
PWM	“Postscript to ‘What is Metaphysics’” trans. W.McNeill, in <i>Pathmarks</i> ed. W.McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998

QCT	“The Question Concerning Technology” in <i>The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays</i> trans. W.Lovitt, New York: Harper, 1977
RFT	“The Rectorate 1933/4: Facts and Thoughts” trans. L.Harries, in G.Neske & E.Kettering ed <i>Martin Heidegger and National Socialism</i> New York: Paragon House, 1990
SGU	“The Self-Assertion of the German University” trans. L.Harries in G.Neske & E.Kettering ed <i>Martin Heidegger and National Socialism</i> New York: Paragon House, 1990
SI	“ <i>Spiegel</i> Interview with Martin Heidegger” trans. L.Harries in G.Neske & E.Kettering ed <i>Martin Heidegger and National Socialism</i> New York: Paragon House, 1990
SR	“Science and Reflection” trans. W.Lovitt, in <i>The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays</i> New York: Harper, 1977
ST	<i>Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom</i> trans. J.Stambaugh, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985
TB	“Time and Being” trans. J.Stambaugh, in <i>On Time and Being</i> New York: Harper, 1972
Th	“The Thing” trans. A.Hofstadter, in <i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i> New York: Harper, 1971
TP	“The Thinker as Poet” trans. A.Hofstadter, in <i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i> New York: Harper, 1971
Tu	“The Turning” trans. W.Lovitt, in <i>The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays</i> New York: Harper, 1977
W	“Words” trans. J.Stambaugh, in <i>On the Way to Language</i> San Francisco: Harper, 1971
WAP	“What are Poets for?” trans. A.Hofstadter, in <i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i> New York: Harper, 1971
WCT	<i>What is Called Thinking</i> trans.J.Glenn Gray, New York: Harper, 1968
WL	“The Way to Language” trans. P. Hertz, in <i>On the Way to Language</i> San Francisco: Harper, 1971
WM	“What is Metaphysics” trans. W.McNeill, in <i>Pathmarks</i> ed. W. McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998
WN	“The World of Nietzsche: ‘God is Dead’” trans. W. Lovitt, in <i>The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays</i> New York: Harper, 1977
WP	<i>What is Philosophy</i> trans. W.Kluback & J.Wilde, Plymouth: Vision, 1989
WT	<i>What is a Thing?</i> trans. W.Barton & V.Deutsch Chicago: Regnery, 1968

Preface

The Subject of Learning

To know means *to be able to learn*. In the common sense view, to be sure, knowledge belongs to the man who has no further need to learn because he has finished learning. No, only that man is knowing who understands that he must keep learning over and over again and who above all, on the basis of this understanding has attained to the point where he is always *able to learn*.

Martin Heidegger *An Introduction to Metaphysics*

This thesis concerns the question of learning: what is called learning? What calls for and is called for in learning? This thesis is part of a larger project that believes that it is currently essential for us to relearn learning. We urgently need to relearn what learning fundamentally is, can be and should be, and we need to do that relearning in a way that makes it fundamental to all that is who and how we are.

There are four major contexts which have informed the particular way in which the question concerning learning arose for me.

1 Learning Institution

The first context is reflexive. A doctorate is the highest institutionalisation of learning. In undertaking to write a doctoral thesis, I was aware that I was pursuing what can seem a constrained and artificial form of learning. Why then seek this institutional form of learning? I should say immediately that I was encouraged to take this opportunity to do some fundamental research. If a doctorate no longer *demand*s this, it certainly affords one of the last places and times – and one which is disappearing as universities economically rationalise and technologically vocationalise – to think things through thoroughly. And it has always seemed to me that a *Philosophiae Doctor*, as the highest institutional manifestation of a discipline, should involve a *doctrinae philosophia*, making a contribution to the basis of a discipline's learning – i.e., not merely what it learns, but how.

Given the increasing esotericism of the doctoral mode of learning it is perhaps necessary to ask, what do these sorts of institutional forms do to learning? To forestall the

risk involved in all examined work – that one is learning merely how to, or in order to, comply with the institutional requirements, unlearning all that has been learnt the moment the institution recognizes that learning – I had to believe that institutionalisation enhances learning. I had to have faith that I was learning from this process, that I was learning more, or more fundamentally, or that others, perhaps the institution itself, would learn from converting my learning into what could be put forward as a thesis. I have therefore sustained myself as a doctoral candidate by believing that institutionalised learning accesses something of the essence of learning. And so from the outset of this degree program, I have been self-conscious about the relation between the institution of learning and what learning essentially is.

This situation was enhanced by conducting my higher learning in the humanities. At this time of pervasive instrumental pragmatism, it is impossible not to be continually reminded of what a purely institutional phenomenon the humanities now is. Throughout the last decade, the Arts have had to account for themselves continually in the face of fiscal restraint. There has been no avoiding the question, what is actually being learnt in these non-professional sections of our educational institutions? What knowledges and skills do they develop and how? Early on I became embarrassed at the self-justifications defensively put forward by representatives of the humanities. They seemed to merely re-invoke anachronistic notions of the Arts as a form of general education.^{1*} No mechanisms were ever put forward to explain this assertion and more significantly, no fundamental interrogation of what learning was or might be, such that it could be accessed ‘in general’ through the particular institutional disciplines of the humanities, was ever undertaken. I began to be troubled by what learning was, or at least what it was that learning was thought to be, such that the form of learning that occurs in the Faculty of the Arts could still claim to be accessing *the art* or faculty of learning. What is the notion of learning that sustains how I have learnt what it is that I have presumably learnt by completing a doctorate in the Arts? What is the relation between the essence of learning and its institutionalisation as a humanities education?

* Endnotes to the Preface commence on page 28.

2 Learning Deconstruction

The second context concerns what it was that I spent my higher education learning. Almost throughout I focused on what I will call Post(structural)humanism.² This term intends to refer to the teachings of Martin Heidegger and of those who learned from those teachings, like Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida.³ The term usefully points to what is pertinent to this thesis. It firstly signals a Structuralism, which was less explicitly Heidegger's than brought to or bolstered by Heidegger's thinking. This hermeneutics of suspicion, initially exemplified by Freud, Nietzsche and Marx, taught us that what we take to be the case, especially what we think is essential in ourselves or the world, is rather something we teach ourselves, something we instruct ourselves to believe, think or do: we exist in structures through which we learn what is and how to be in relation to what is.⁴

Heidegger's contribution to this structuralism was a certain type of antihumanism, a perspective which he retrieved from the marginalisation with which Nietzsche's anti-academicism had imbued it. Heidegger taught us that the category of the human which centres around the idea of the subject of representation through which every one of us (western) moderns thinks and acts, is the primary structure we have miseducated ourselves into. It is also, according to Heidegger, our greatest obstacle to authentically learning about our situation, that is, about the error of our learning and the urgency of learning another way of being.

In revealing the necessity of structuralism's antihumanism, Heidegger opened up the poststructural condition.⁵ This is a situation in which the question of learning should become unavoidable. It is firstly merely the question of how it is that we learn things that are not the case. Deconstruction is thus a way of revealing the institutionalisations that are behind how we essentialise errors. But poststructuralism is also the issue of how it is that we can learn *that* we have learned something that essentially is not. Further, the poststructural condition entails being concerned about how we are meant to learn anything after learning about the error of our learning. For instance, I learned that the accusation of poststructuralism's nihilism or relativism, when divested of its aggressive panic, was in fact a call for an answer to the question, what (now) is learning?⁶ What is left of learning? If we have learned the anti-essentialist implications of the way in which we mislearn by essentialising, by metaphysically instituting essences when there are none, what

and how are we to learn? Are we now structurally incapable of learning, or must we find a way to continue to institute essences metaphysically?

Whilst it is certainly the case that much poststructuralism is not troubled by this condition, merely perpetuating the humanities in the form of critique now that their essence has been eroded, it always seemed to me that the best poststructuralism was an attempt to learn how to learn in post-humanities ways, in ways that were no longer sustained by an institutionally essentialised notion of the human. What then might the essence of learning be such that one could learn from poststructuralism's attempt to disable structuring essences? To let the paradox of that last question go in either direction: is learning one of the remaining undeconstructed essentialisms? Can one in fact learn (anything) from Post(structural)humanism (Ph from now on)? What would a Ph Doctorate be or mean? What essence of learning would allow or would be allowed by this institutionalization?

3 Learning Sustainability

The third context for the way the question concerning learning impressed itself upon me came from a quite distinct, though in the end very related, activity. For the last 5 years, I have been part of a community committed to establishing an alternative institution of higher learning.⁷ Contrary to pluralism's current hegemony in universities, especially the humanities, this institution deliberately seeks to be a uni-versity; that is to say, its avowed aim is to turn all things in a single direction, in this case, orienting everything toward the question concerning sustainability. This idea for a new type of educational institution is more regulative (in the Kantian sense) than restrictive – what sustainability is and how it is to be attained is precisely what is there to be learned – but in focusing on developing the ability to sustain, it purports to offer a general, even a transcendent, education and certainly one which I and those involved with me in this project would claim is essential.

Here then, the question of how to institute an essential form of learning became most explicit. All participating in this project of institutionalisation had been confronted over the last 10 years – though importantly, mainly from experiences outside universities which have only very belatedly taken heed of ecological issues – by the extent of the world's current unsustainability. The situation today manifests how we humans have structurally conditioned ourselves into erroneous ways to be, ways which threaten our ability to be. This forces a thorough reconsideration of learning. If learning is something natural, a form

of evolutionary development, how could we have learned to be so naturally un- and anti-natural? If learning is something rational, a way of accessing the truth, how could we have so completely failed to learn the relational implications of our actions? If learning is something instrumentally functional, a mechanism for sustaining individuals and communities, how could we have learned to be so dysfunctionally unsustainable? What is learning that we can learn things that are not only not the case but are even against our (long term) interests?

Further, the success of this learning now seems to be an obstacle to our ability to learn how to become sustainable. We have acquired a strong addiction to unsustainable desires and deep habits for unsustainable actions. We have so thoroughly structured our environments to sustain these unsustainable ways of working and living that sustainable options are nearly unthinkable. In these circumstances, we urgently need a fundamental re-education. What then is the type of learning that will begin to turn us around? What is the essence of learning that we need to institute to sustain us in this time of unsustainability? To what extent is the way we have learned to learn one of our problems? In which case, how will we learn or relearn the essence of learning? These are the questions that have been informing my work in the establishment of an institution for the higher learning of sustainability.

4 Learning Times

The final context for my work on this thesis is what I believe to be my general historical context. Having begun to focus on the question of learning, on the need for fundamentally relearning learning, I started to see this exigency everywhere. It seemed to me that the question of learning was underwriting most popular concerns.

Very schematically, and presuming too many things, I realised that we need to learn for instance:

- **How to cope with economic restructuring**

As what is exchanged shifts from goods to services, the nature of required work skills changes. Both governments and industry must now dedicate significant proportions of their revenue to training and retraining. Because the nature of the coming economy centres around flexibility and provisionality, learning is no longer a transitional phase to be followed by the stable implementation of what has been learned. Labour forces are currently learning how to work in continually changing environments; they are learning

how to keep on learning throughout their changing work. In response, individuals are learning new career patterns, moving between professions, learning a completely new skill base a number of times throughout their life. Given that each set of practices is developing its own tailored form of education to enhance the efficiency of the process by which its skills can be acquired, what is the general or inherent form of learning that allows each of us to learn each new mode of learning? Without asking this question, *and instituting a response*, we will default to that minimal form of pragmatic rationality that reproduces a consumerist subjectivity. For all the changing circumstances of our working lives, which these days *are* our lives, a minimal self is being installed as the unchanging and soon unchangeable *subiectum* of how we learn to cope with our world.

- **How to cope with new technologies**

Technological devices provide us with new facilities, shortcutting existing tasks and making possible new types of tasks. To this extent, such tools embody something learnt about us, about what we need and desire to do, and about how we do such things. But to service us, we must in turn learn both how to instrumentally use these devices, and then how to make them instrumental to our way of doing things. The learning contained in a technology will only become available to us if we can learn how to relate to that learning, learning how to work with what is now already-learnt by it and therefore no longer needs to be learned by us. We must habituate ourselves to these technologies, no longer having to learn certain things in exchange for being able to do others.⁸ Only certain forms of learning can be materialised however. In learning how to use technologies that have already done some learning for us, are we unlearning certain things? How can we learn what it is that we are learning and unlearning by making technologies integral to how we work and live? We need to interrogate what learning fundamentally is, in order to protect the only tool we have for retooling ourselves, for sustaining ourselves in the future.

- **How to care for ourselves and our environments**

The Kantian project for freeing individuals from tutelage has been realised by a free market economy opening in the space vacated by the retreat of government. In this situation, one of the remaining responsibilities of the state is education. When the state declines to legislate against, and police, unethical behaviour, whether toward the self (health), others (family, community, work place relations, etc), or other things (environmental sustainability), but finds that such unethical behaviour hinders the running of the free market with its consequent costs to the state, then the state has no option but to educate

people, teaching them what is good (reasonable, predictable) and what is bad (unfair, uncompetitive). This is why learning is currently portrayed as the panacea to all social (i.e., economic) ills. As with all forms of mass production, mass education inevitably reduces the process of learning to the most efficient, lowest common denominator. And so we risk teaching ourselves limited forms of learning (e.g., information awareness, behavioural change) in order to learn how to be global citizens. For instance, at this point of thorough and perpetual change, we are teaching ourselves that less and less can be changed, merely because these sorts of essentialisms are simplistic enough to be taught efficiently *en masse*: “your health is determined by your genes”; “there’s no changing human nature”; “sustainability is the attainable balance between the necessity of economic growth and the measurable limits of ecosystems”.⁹ Unless we can learn what learning fundamentally is, we could educate ourselves out of the only possibility for fundamental change we have.

- **How to institute learning**

As learning has become an increasing social necessity, the design of our educational institutions has begun to expose its limits. No longer holding a clear idea of what learning is and should be, universities have become anachronistic containers for an ever greater diversity of things to learn and ways of learning.¹⁰ In the face of withdrawing government support and changing technological economies, these educational institutions are proving unable to teach us what we need to learn. We are now in need of new forms of educational institutions, and proposals are now being developed (the so-called multiversity, the virtual campus, etc). How can we learn whether these are the educational institutions we need? Without determining what learning should be, without establishing institutions designed to harbour and develop what learning can be, we will be left with a market-driven form of accreditation, with no way of learning what is being learned or unlearned.

- **Who we are**

By economics, by technology, by the international institutions economically and technologically educating us, we are being taught to be global, to be a ‘we’, to have a common nature, politics, economy, and even language (whether monetary or digital or both). Becoming one sort of planetary being obviously entails learning and unlearning: for some it means only learning a little, or learning standard things in the usual way, but unlearning how that way of learning and those things being learnt are not and perhaps should not be common to all; for others it means learning a lot, learning aberrant things in unusual ways to the extent that one must unlearn completely who and how one usually is.

Without seeking to learn about learning, we will never be able to learn which is happening when. Without seeking to institute our fundamental ways of learning, each 'we' will not be able to learn who they are or should be in the face of what we are being taught to be.¹¹

We live in times where learning is everything, yet who is asking after that learning? Who is seeking to learn what the learning is that allows learning to be everything?

Learning is, in essence, disappearing in its pervasiveness, getting exhausted in its excessiveness. Ours is an epoch of sheer learning: anything can be learnt, and yet nothing is being learned. We need to urgently relearn learning.

Essential Learning

Over the last decade then, I have been learning in and from these contexts. In many ways, what was learned in each taught me something about the others and thus about what the notion of learning might be that straddled these contexts. Would it be possible to institute a new type of general education, a post-humanities in which one could learn the arts of a deconstructive sustainability appropriate to our current circumstances? If so, what would be the nature of this new form of learning, and more significantly, what would be the nature of the learning by which we would learn to move from our current erroneous forms of learning to a sustainable learning of sustainability?

As is very apparent, this line of inquiry kept ending up at a certain essentialism. What the essence of learning might be became insistent in my research. My Ph education had succeeded, I thought, in making me a vigilant anti-essentialist.¹² That is to say, I had been trained to read all claims to a metaphysical essence as mere institutionalisations: I believed that upon interrogation all essences would give up those inessential things which were sustaining them, those obstinate materialisms or technical contradictions which constructed the essence and were then metaphysically disavowed. From the perspective of the second of my educational contexts just outlined, I learned to suspect the essentialist desires underlying all the other contexts I was working in and with. Consequently, for some time then, I pursued the hypocritical path of seeking the essence of learning in order to deny the essentiality of whatever was found.

As I went round this circle, sustaining an unsustainable project by continually relearning its unsustainability without ever learning how to make it sustainable, I became aware of the extent to which learning is in many ways fundamentally missed. Despite the

fact that everyone everywhere is advocating more and better education, I was surprised to find how little sustained investigation existed of what learning is, can or should be.

On the one hand, those who were most explicitly involved in education, across all the disciplines of higher learning for instance, seemed to be mostly unaware, at least in their formal research topics, that the whole of their activities concerned learning. I was amazed by how little the discipline of philosophy for instance, which purports to think things through thoroughly, addressed the issue of learning in any substantial form, despite the fact that philosophy's unavoidable abstractness meant that it could not purport to be *doing* anything else. It was as if learning was too close for any of these professional educators, with their gaze fixed only on the contents of their discipline, to see. One of the lesser aims of this thesis is merely to rectify the way learning is essentially neglected today. At the risk of overstating the point, and over-inflating the meaning of 'learning', this thesis will read nearly everything in terms of essential learning to demonstrate the centrality of the question concerning the essence of learning.

On the other hand, I grew very frustrated with the field specifically named educational philosophy or theory. Even here, the fundamental nature of learning was either taken for granted or immediately delimited from a particular perspective: empiricism, rationalism, liberalism, behaviouralism, etc. A naturalistic, functional and pragmatic pluralism seems to dominate educationalist discourses. Work regularly leaps straight over a basic questioning of learning to issues of delimited application. It is as if one could never go further than to say that learning simply happens and that the imperative is merely to enhance learning with a range of instruments tailored to specialised learning tasks performed by unself-conscious categories of learner types.¹³ It appeared to be the anti-intellectual combination of a passivism – learning just happens to people – and an activism – learning is there just to be done in which case our job is merely to frenetically multiply the number of situations in which learning can run its course. To me, given my education, this seemed to be less a considered anti-essentialism, convinced of the inherent multiplicity of the various manifestations of learning (the generic term itself therefore seeming increasingly empty or dangerous), than a suspect refusal to consider the essentials of learning and the likelihood that a certain essentialism was being maintained by educational theory and practice.

It was at this point, whilst trying to explain the way learning tended to withdraw (the thinking behind this moment is set out in the Introduction) that I made what is perhaps a

very obvious discovery, or rather, I at last learned, that is relearned, something that I should have already, and is perhaps generally, known. I realised that the tension which existed in my work between essences and institutionalisations was resolved by learning itself. *An institution becomes an essence by learning.* A construction structures after it is learned. An ideology for instance becomes reality and disappears as ideological when the learning of it has been accomplished. A metaphysics is *metaphysical* because it has been learnt into, and as, all that physically is. *Learning is the form of instituting that essentialises.*

It is difficult for me to capture the nature of this turn around. It had ontological implications in a double sense: it changed my ontology, the way things are for me, but it did so precisely by teaching me that learning is ontological, that ontologies are learned, that ‘what is’ is only insofar as it is learned, insofar as we learn that and what it is, but that for all its having been learned, it is no less ‘what is’, in the sense of being what must be.

Perhaps the best way to access this is to explain how I came to accept the essentialism inherent in my approach to learning. If an institution can become an essence by learning, then we learn something about both learning and essence.¹⁴ We learn on the one hand that learning can result in essences, in things that are so essential that they seem never to have been learned: in other words, learning can result in the complete concealment of itself. But conversely, an essence, even in its most ontological essentiality, is still the result of learning and can nevertheless be unlearned – with difficulty admittedly, but the possibility still exists.

This argument, in which the notion of essence is relearned by its relation to learning, allowed me to tolerate the essentialism that was dominating my research. I gave in to the risk that I was seeking an essentialist notion of learning because I felt that another non-essentialist, i.e., learned, notion of essentiality was arriving with this line of work.

I therefore formulated the hypothesis that learning in essence involves the institution of essences: the essence of learning happens as the learning of what will then be essential.

Heidegger Learning

I was now unashamedly seeking the essence of learning, and in particular looking for how the essence of learning manifested in discourses that were explicitly seeking to learn things in ways that would make such things essential. I therefore turned more to discourses attempting to perform pure or abstract acts of learning than to discourses about learning; that is to say, given the restrictions of most education theory to aspects of specialised

application, I took to researching how learning occurred in the teachings of inapplicable generalisms, i.e., philosophy, especially Heidegger's. Heidegger only occasionally, though more thoroughly than most philosophers, addresses the notion of learning. More importantly however, Heidegger satisfied perfectly the two criteria I was looking for in order to learn about essential learning.

On the one hand, Heidegger was one of the last philosophers,¹⁵ that is, one of the last pure philosophers. Heidegger himself not only claimed this, but explicitly lived it – he was one of the last who could and did live the philosopher's life, essentially. As a result, his teachings have a reputation for being, at least initially, thoroughly abstract, and in many places, as Part One will document, his teachings proudly reassert this. To me, this lack of identifiable content or objective meant that such teachings would have to be negotiations and manifestations of the essence of learning, of learning happening without the interference of predetermined 'to-be-learned's. This is why I believe Heidegger's unceasing commitment to the most essential possibilities of philosophising did mean that he was, throughout his life and exemplarily, concerned with the university as *the* institution of *higher learning*, that is, with the essential learning that ought to happen there as the realisation of the most essential aspects of human being. I thus felt compelled to learn Heidegger in order to learn about the sort of essential learning that was clearly instituted in his attempt to teach everything (Being) and Nothing.

On the other hand, Heidegger's avowed philosophicality also meant that he was one of the last to insist upon the *existential essentiality* of philosophy, the absolute necessity of philosophy, the exigency of the questions Heidegger felt were fundamental to what philosophy is. For all its abstractions and purity, Heidegger's philosophy is also thoroughly existential, devoted to making what it philosophised an essential part of the lives of all who learned it, and even beyond them, an essential part of the world. Whilst Heidegger is explicitly critical of the metaphysics of *essentia*, what he taught he taught with the intention of instituting as essential for the future of humanity and the earth. Learning therefore seemed to be utterly central to what Heidegger had to be understood to be doing. The role learning played in Heidegger's teaching was therefore going to be axial to my research into the essence of learning as the institution of essences.

However, almost immediately after resolving the central role Heidegger was to play in my research, I learned something essential about the essence of learning that would modify my working hypothesis slightly but thereby affirm for me the rightness of the direction in

which I was heading, at least with respect to what Heidegger could contribute to my project. When examining Heidegger's introductions and asides about his own mode of teaching, about how to learn from the somewhat hermetic intra-relationality of his way of thinking (all this work is contained in Part One) I began to notice the extent to which Heidegger insisted upon the necessity of considering all that he was doing as necessary. Certainly one seemed to learn as one worked through his teachings that his *way* of teaching was indeed *necessary to what* he was teaching. But in stepping back, I began to realize that one only got into a position to learn this, that is, got into his thinking at all, by granting his thinking *a certain necessity at the outset*, before having learned it.¹⁶ One learned the extent to which he was teaching essential things only after presuming that he was teaching essential things.

Heidegger could thus be seen firstly to be making use of the essence of learning because he was teaching abstract things – i.e., essences. He could secondly be read as demonstrating the essence of learning by seeking to render what could be learned from his philosophical teachings essential – i.e., (Heideggerian) philosophy teaches the essentiality of (learning about) essences. Most significantly though, it could now be suggested that thirdly, in Heidegger, the essence of learning was being shown to happen by way of essentiality – i.e., learning happens through projecting the essentiality of what is being learnt.

In other words, I glimpsed that my hypothesis about the essence of learning as a mode of instituting spoke not just about *what learning results in*, but also about *how learning attained that effect*. Learning seemed to be the process of literally instituting essences: installing the to-be-learned as essential was an essential part of how learning instituted essences.

Abstracting then from what I was learning about learning by learning (with) Heidegger, I thus developed a working hypothesis that: learning essentially proceeds via essentiality; learning in essence is the instituting of essences and this happens by the sustained insistence upon the essentiality of what is being learned and how; learning is a particular kind of strong act, one that wills necessities; learning happens only as the formative essential process of teaching (oneself). I was therefore now writing a thesis that attempted to explore the implications of this hypothesis, to set out what it would mean for learning to be essentially institutional.

Metaphysical Things

As I built up evidence and explanations for this hypothesis – in the teachings of Heidegger, but also in interpretations of other Ph teachers, as well as in the work I was doing with others in establishing an institution for the higher learning of sustainability and the interfaces this required with more conventional knowledge- and skills-based forms of learning – I also began to perceive the implications of what I was proposing. The consequences of what I had up to this point been quite naively pursuing started to become apparent. If learning manages to institute essences merely by insisting upon the essentiality of what it is instituting, then this amounts to thoroughly radical constructivism, a totally anthropocentric form of self-assertion.

Apart from anything else, this hypothesis about learning, which I was mostly deriving from the way Heidegger was teaching, was utterly opposing all that Heidegger is conventionally understood to have been teaching. Heidegger is generally learnt as having taught, at least in his later teachings, the need to overcome all forms of metaphysics by refusing exactly the sort of assertive acts of humanistic intentionality that appear to be mobilised in my hypothesis about the institutional essence of learning. There are few these days who suggest that Heidegger was advocating the sort of metaphysical and profoundly nihilistic relation to ‘what is’ that my hypothesis was imputing to the process of learning at work in his teachings. At the most, Heidegger is currently deconstructed as having failed to completely undo his dependence upon anthropocentric metaphysics. In one way, my reading of Heidegger’s teaching contributed to this deconstructive approach by revealing the residual metaphysicality of his teaching processes, irrespective of what was being taught with it. If Heidegger is still metaphysical in his attempt to negotiate the closure of metaphysics, it is, this thesis could be suggesting, because he is teaching, that is to say, using the unavoidable metaphysicality that is essential to learning.¹⁷ However, in this case, the mode of learning that I found in Heidegger, far from being essential, should be considered deceptive and dangerous, something to be avoided and resisted.

However, I was convinced that my hypothesis was learning something essential, about learning. My conviction came from the sort of learning that I had been able to achieve by working with this hypothesis, and also the sort of teaching that I was able to develop for non-Heideggerian content – i.e., design for sustainability – by miming Heidegger’s strategies. I therefore resolved to confront the issue, returning to Heidegger’s teachings, this time with more focus on the content of the philosophy being taught. Part Two is the

result of this attempt to relearn Heidegger, especially the courses and lectures of the '30s where it is felt that Heidegger, in the midst of attaining his most assertively metaphysical moments, appears to recoil, projecting these moments onto Nietzsche in order to distance himself from them and thereby open a space (literally, i.e., by now teaching via the topicality of Being rather than the transcendental question of the meaning or truth of Being) for the development of a different, more meditative relation to the way beings as a whole currently manifest their presencing.

It is no coincidence that these crucial writings, in which Heidegger is presumably learning the most – i.e., turning – are also those in which Heidegger most thematically addresses the nature of learning, whether via the Greek notions of *mathesis* and *paideia*, by way of understanding Nietzsche's Zarathustra as the essential teacher of the essential, or as a way of understanding the happening of truth that art can accomplish. They are also the teachings through which Heidegger is for the first time learning to discern the technological nature of our epoch.

What I learned through this return to Heidegger is that there is a need to differentiate the metaphysical *process* of learning – the investment in, and even will-to, something like transcendence – from the metaphysical *doctrines* which determine the nature of our modernity. This amounted to a clarification of my hypothesis about learning. The process of instituting something essential is a *praxis*,¹⁸ in the fully Aristotelian sense of a dynamic-energetic entelechy, which Heidegger taught us was the human equivalent of the *kinésis* that lies at the essence of *phýsis*, though which has been perhaps better explicated by Hannah Arendt's notions of action and willing (Arendt being one of those who learned the most, or perhaps rather the best, from Heidegger). Part Two will explain what this means, but for now it is enough to say that, the process of learning, even though it is projective, is not in any way a calculating economy. The essential learning process must be understood without recourse to representation or the notion of a pre-determined subject, *as metaphysics has taught, i.e., takes-for-granted, this mode of being*, existing before and after the learning process and thus directing it. Notions of the subject of representation signal precisely the withdrawal, or as will be argued, the abstraction, of learning that has led to what Heidegger describes as our current technical abandonment of Being.

Most significantly, understanding the institutional essence of learning as a *praxis* in this way, in fact renders this forcefully formative process *thoroughly finitudinal*. Part Two will attempt to show how Heidegger teaches us that essential learning is in fact thoroughly

thingly, confronting the materialistic resistance with which the ontologicality of the already-learned manifests. This confrontational finitude that grounds essential learning is what differentiates it from the metaphysics of the representative subject that thinks of itself as unlimited, that is to say, only ever *technically* limited.

According to this reading then, Heidegger is indeed advocating that we need to relearn the institutional essence of learning. He is teaching us that there is no avoiding the metaphysical anthropocentric qualities of learning. Essential learning in this sense is still operational even now, despite our perpetual attempts to deny this. Our task is therefore to recover the project of learning *qua* project. We must relearn the essential relation between ontologies and learning. To this extent, the whole of Heidegger's teachings can be read as performatively demonstrating, via learning tools such as the formal indication 'Being', the ontologicality of learning, that is to say, the way in which the essences of things are instituted by learning.

Polemics

My confrontation with the role of learning in Heidegger therefore has meant that whenever I read a sentence beginning, 'We must learn to ...' – the sort of phrase that is frequently employed at the end of academic essays, especially Heidegger commentaries, as in, 'we must learn to dwell non-anthropocentrically on the earth', 'we must learn to think without a metaphysical will', 'we must learn to expose and undo institutions of power', etc – I am more concerned about the nature of that learning than I am about what follows in such exhortations. How would one go about such 'learning'? This thesis intends to show that I have been learning, mainly *through or with* Heidegger, that one learns by anthropocentrically and metaphysically willing and instituting. This does not preclude unlearning certain types of anthropocentrism, metaphysics and empowered institutions for instance; but it does mean that such activities are always a form of self-overcoming, a will-not-to-will, a metaphysical anti-metaphysics, an institute sustaining the activity of de-instituting.

The polemic of this thesis then is that we must not shy away from anthropocentrically and institutionally essentialising: this is what learning essentially entails. When Heidegger (or Derrida for instance) says that we must 'learn to overcome metaphysics', the first half of this command is more important, at least initially, than the second: the phrase therefore says, 'we must learn, by being metaphysical, to overcome metaphysics.' Learning only

happens when there is a project and when that project is guided by a driving projecting. Learning is very much a 'meta'-process, a moving 'beyond' in both the futural and the superior sense. This metaphysical aspect to learning is what *launches* the learning process, that which initiates the *changing* that is learning, the *leading out* that is at the essence of an e-ducational ex-perience.

In elaborating the institutional essence of learning in this way, several other issues are being co-learned as it were. I have already mentioned the relearning of essence that is attempting to happen through this thesis' self-consciously performative essentialising. More directly, this thesis is concerned to relearn the essence of technology, humanism and the interrelation between them.

Technology and humanism have clearly been opposed conceptually for some time, the one being technical and thus anti-human, the other being everything that surpasses technicality. However, there are also lots of discourses, often outside the university – i.e., the general enthusiasm for progress¹⁹ – that have seen the two as inseparable. From this thesis' point of view, what holds them together is learning in its institutional essence as an anthropocentric *praxis*. The chiasmus at work here between technology, humanism and learning means that:

a) technology, or rather the essence of technology – that (learning) which we must (learn to) appropriate if we are to (learn to) become otherwise than technological(ly) – must be understood as much less technical, much more formative, as a gathering and throwing project;

b) humanism, or rather the essence of humanism – that (learning) which we must (learn to) appropriate if we are to (learn to) become post-human(istly), more human(e) than humanism – must be understood as being much more technical, much more directional, as a gathering and throwing project.

What we stand to learn, about learning (with/in/from Heidegger), is how to understand technology and humanism; we learn how to stand in their correlative essence that is concealed when they are re-presented as standing apart; we learn how to withstand their re-presentations of who and how we are and thereby learn how to learn how to be otherwise.

To put it the other way around, what we can learn about learning from Heidegger teaches us that the current anti-essentialism of both technology and humanism (or rather, the humanities) is the completion of technology and humanism in their essence-concealing

separation: if technology and humanism continue, ever stronger, it is because they are in fact proceeding essentialistically, or as Heidegger's teachings put it, metaphysically. And until we learn this, *and learn how to reappropriate* it from its dirempted concealment, each will continue just as it is, unlearned and increasingly unlearnable.

The 'learning' that this thesis is therefore polemically reappropriating and promoting could, then, be understood to be a *certain* technological humanism, or what is perhaps best summarised by the German term, *Bildung*. However it must be immediately said, or preferably projected out-front before-hand, that the interrelations at work in this thesis mean that the 'certain'ness of this technological humanism derive from the way technology and humanism are being relearned by this appropriative promotion, and relearned to an extent that they are certainly no longer certain, certainly not just technological or humanistic.²⁰ The essence of learning that this thesis is after therefore lies in the difference between the project of instituting essences as a technical economy with (pre)represented subjects and objects and the simultaneously more reflexive and more ec-static version of that projecting. It is precisely the gatheredness of the latter that ensures its finitudinal delimitedness, just as the calculative economy of the former is exactly what necessitates its unlimited infinitude. Learning will thus be shown in this thesis to be that (*form of*) making that is not a (*type of*) making, a forming that is not a typing, a making that is not a production, a pro-*ducing* rather than a technique for making. Or again, to put it from the other direction, there is a danger that in humanistly seeking to resist the calculative planning of Technology, what is taken to be the danger is all forms of projecting, rather than just that economisation of projecting that precisely seeks to overcome the projectedness of projecting.

I hope to show that the closeness of what this thesis is promoting as the essence of learning to all that endangers modern existence is necessary insofar as it is precisely *by learning* that 'we' come to be in the situation we now are; this is why the 'way out' or through involves *appropriation*, relearning learning in its dangerousness. To put it autobiographically, it is only through seeking to learn about learning as essentially anthropocentric that I believe I have begun to actually learn what Ph is and why it is necessary for our future sustainability: before this thesis, I was, with many 'trained' in poststructuralism I suspect, taking for granted that 'the human' was the problem, without ever having really understood why or what this meant.

Failings

I have, I hope, learned much from my institutional higher education. I have however over the last decade spent much time trying to learn things that the university has not yet felt comfortable about teaching. Ph has taken some time to be fully embraced as a worthwhile way of thinking. There are still elements that militantly oppose it as an undisciplined bad influence on the impressionable minds of students. It is true however, that Ph *should have* itself opposed its full assimilation by the university. When doing its job rigorously, Ph always demands critical reflection on the institutional processes it depends upon to research and teach.²¹ This should be an uncomfortable relation, for both the institution being scrutinised and the Ph scrutineer – though it should be admitted that one can easily grow comfortable by being the perpetual cause of discomfort; and it should also be noted that this ‘naughtiness’ has at times facilitated Ph’s institutional reception, not because those practicing Ph develop an exploitable understanding of how the institution functions (which they could), but because the university today markets itself through its tenured radicals.²² The point here however is that by being interested in the institutionality of the institution over the last 10 years, in wanting to learn about how learning happens at universities, in the humanities for instance, I have mostly failed to follow the example of the institution.

Being part of a community concerned about sustainability has exacerbated these failings perhaps more than my education in Ph modes of working, which are now quite tolerated and even promoted. As I mentioned, universities have been embarrassingly slow to notice the significance of issues of sustainability. This is no doubt because there is an unavoidable judgementalism and even morality at the core of sustainability. It is impossible to make sense of sustainability without making decisions about what should and shouldn’t be sustained. Current attempts to avoid making these decisions, as for instance has happened at an international political level with empty notions such as ‘sustainable development’, end up bolstering the status quo, that is, the free market, sustaining the unsustainable. It is this decisionistic aspect inherent to sustainability that I believe has delayed and perverted its entry into the pluralist universe of tertiary education institutions. I have often been disparaged, especially by peers, for insisting that there are imperatives to which we must accede, things that are worth believing and that when instituted as essences in one’s work, lead one to believe that many of the things currently being done around the world and thus in universities are not only not worthwhile, but dangerous.²³

I mention these things, because their consequences manifest in the nature of this thesis. It has perhaps an overly strong thesis, certainly an overly broad thesis. It is clearly more undisciplined than transdisciplinary. It attempts to survey a wide range of fields from perspectives that are mostly thought to have nothing to do with those fields, ignoring the fields that would conventionally be thought to be most pertinent. Up until recently, the thesis moved further beyond Heidegger than it does in this final form. Confronting the anthropocentric metaphysicality of my hypothesis in terms of Heidegger's teachings through the '30s sidetracked the project I had set myself with the result that this thesis in the end focusses only on Heideggerian learning. The Conclusion to this thesis is only an indication of the consequences of taking this Heideggerian learning as exemplary of the essence of learning, establishing guidelines for future learning, or rather, teaching.

Given the way in which this thesis has been contained, I would now like to explain why residual wider claims about the essence of learning have been deliberately left in the thesis, most notably in the Introduction that follows. This explanation, which may still be too oblique, is at least necessary in the hope of soliciting some grace from the reader for these arrogations which are not always qualified or substantiated later.

Essentials

I have certainly found the path that this thesis maps absolutely necessary in every regard. To me, there is a parsimony about the directions that this thesis now follows, and this Preface has sought to give some insight into the contexts that frame that necessity.

It needs to be said though that if everything in the Preface so far has been cast in terms of 'me', creating an impression of autodidacticism, where in fact the situation has been entirely one of tutelage, in which I have only ever been taught, only ever learned from (and only then maybe with) others, if all these debts have been erased by this Preface's contextualisation, it is part of a strategy this thesis is adopting in order to testify to what has been learned, in order to put that learning into practice. By reprojecting what I have been taught about the institutional essence of learning as what I have learned about learning, that is to say, as what I have been forced to learn about learning not by someone, but by the inherent nature of learning itself – 'I' am hopefully re-presenting that learning within the sort of necessity that will allow it to be essentially re-learned by others.²⁴

The point here is thus a performative one, since as a constative it is a deception. This thesis is attempting to do what it is saying, essentially learning essential learning. Or, to put

it in a way that should begin the process: this thesis ‘is’ making use of the essence of learning to learn *and teach* the essence of learning, which is why the way it proceeds ‘is’ essential.

There are two related forms of this ‘teaching learning’ that can be thought to be at work in how the following has been designed. There is firstly instruction. Etymologically, the term *in-struere* refers to the process of piling things up, that is, sorting things into piles. According to this understanding, instruction is not, as its current connotations of training suggest, the projection of a system laid out up front which is then filled, but rather a process by which one retrospectively finds a stochastic pattern in what one has sorted through. But of course, one cannot start sorting without some sort of project, suggesting that the secret to this form of teaching lies in feigning to *find* to be necessary (essential) what has been in fact *pre-posit*ed (instituted). This thesis therefore attempts to *in-struct* the reader in the essence of learning, finding learning’s underlying order through assorted means.

There is then the classical mode of education, repetition: rote learning, practising or rehearsal. Here, as with the modern sense of instruction, one is being honest about the radical constructivism of education, about the ability of humans to drum anything into themselves. However, the more subtle form of teaching lies in a different form of repetition, one that is not intent on getting beyond this initial training, but is in fact trying to find its way toward repetition. In many ways, this thesis is only trying to say one thing, to have one thesis – or rather, it is trying to learn the ways in which all that is being said is (of) the one thing. But as with instruction, the retrospectivity is a pretense. One never ‘finds’ sameness; one precisely learns *to find* sameness.²⁵

So let us now attempt to learn what learning in essence is, to the point that this thesis will seem to have exhausted its instructiveness and become repetitive.

Endnotes for the Preface

¹ A number of critical thinkers have identified this problem and made differing contributions to other ways of responding. See for instance: Jacques Derrida's various essays on and toward the founding of new educational institutions now collected in *Du Droit à la Philosophie* [Paris: Editions Gallilée, 1990]; Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* trans. B.Massumi [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983], various essays in *The Inhuman* trans. G.Bennington & R.Bolby [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991], *The Postmodern Explained to Children* trans. J.Pefanis & M.Thomas [Sydney: Power Publications, 1992] and *Political Writings* trans.B.Readings & K.Geiman [London: University College London Press, 1993]; Bill Readings' *The University in Ruins* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996]; William Spanos' *The End of Education* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993]; Sam Weber's *Institution and Interpretation* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985].

² With this term I am following in particular William Spanos' use of the term 'posthumanism' (see "The Intellectual and The Posthumanist Occasion" in *The End of Education*) and drawing on Reiner Schürmann's seminal essay "Antihumanism: Reflections of the Turn towards the Post-modern Epoch" *Man and World* v12 (1979).

³ Since this list is more an attempt to contextualise my education rather than define post(structural)humanism, I should add other French theorists like Mikkel-Borch-Jacobsen, Pierre Bourdieu, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy.

⁴ If throughout this thesis, the term 'structure' is used more than is currently fashionable and perhaps in ways that are unjust to its rigorous meaning, it is because it usefully suggests the term 'instruction'. In this way then, things like poststructuralism and deconstruction retain something of the relation to learning that I believe is essential to them.

⁵ See P.Lewis' "The Poststructural Condition" *Diacritics*, v12 (Spring, 1982).

⁶ I refer in particular to the various controversies that have surrounded the importation of Derridean deconstruction into Anglo-American universities. This thesis originally had a chapter concerning deconstruction as a form of post-human(ities) learning. Deconstruction as a learning is overdetermined by its paradoxical history: whilst Derrida and Derrida commentators are adamant that deconstruction is unlearnable as a technique and delivers no learnt results, it has been more widely learnt than perhaps any other twentieth century philosophy. The rapidity and breadth of its being-learnt raised the suspicion of some teachers of deconstruction (e.g., Gasché, Norris and Spivak) who felt that deconstruction was not being sufficiently learned (from), and the ire of those suspicious of it (e.g., Searle and Habermas, but especially all those who exploited the revelation of de Man's youthful Nazi collaborations to denounce deconstruction in the press) who felt that it

simultaneously taught nothing, taught nothingness and taught anything and everything – from nationalistic civil war to unpatriotic pacifism, from fascism to free-market amorality, from dogmatic decisionism to aesthetic indifference – including resistance to further learning. Deconstruction must have touched on something essential, about learning, to evoke this range of responses. This would explain why the central issue in these *public* debates is often pedagogic clarity – plain speaking – versus the need for reflexive complexity in order to learn what needs to be learned – and in this regard, it should be noted that part of deconstruction’s ‘success’ has been its prolific inventiveness in the generation of educational strategies (exemplary here is the work of Gregory Ulmer on post(e)-pedagogies).

⁷ I refer to the EcoDesign Foundation, Sydney Australia. For an introduction to the work done there see the Sustainments Website: ><http://www.edf.edu.au><.

⁸ I am referring here to the way Albert Borgmann (see *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984] and *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992]), Hubert Dreyfus (see *Why Computers Still Can’t Think* and co-authored with Stuart Dreyfus *Mind Over Machine* [New York: Free Press, 1986]), Fernando Flores (see co-authored with Terry Winograd *Computers and Cognition* [Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1987]), and Don Ihde (see *Instrumental Realism* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991] amongst his other works) teach the nature of Technology following Heidegger and the astounding work in a more Arendtian context by Elaine Scarry (*Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1985]).

⁹ These paradoxical un-freedoms of postmodernity have been well documented by sociologists such as Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scott Lasch (see their joint *Reflexive Modernization* [Oxford: Polity Press, 1994]), Zygmunt Bauman (see amongst other of his publications *Modernity and Ambivalence* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990]), and, via a more self-conscious pedagogical strategy, Jean Baudrillard (see for example *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* [St Louis: Telos, 1981]).

¹⁰ I am taking for granted Bill Readings’ critique of the pluralism of the postmodern university in *The University in Ruins*.

¹¹ This thesis inexcusably does not in any way take up the issue of cultural difference and multicultural and intercultural learning, especially in regard to its own ethnocentrism. To begin to negotiate these matters it should, in the context so far laid out in this Preface, at least learn from Gayatri Spivaks’ *Outside in the Teaching Machine* [New York: Routledge, 1993].

¹² This thesis is in a certain way a response to the work currently being done by Hubert Dreyfus, Charles Spinosa and Fernando Flores (see *Disclosing New Worlds* [Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1997]) and the essays by the first two clarifying the relation of their advocacy of a certain applied (i.e., learned) Heidegger to questions of essentialism has been pivotal to this thesis: see “Two Kinds of Antiessentialism and Their Consequences” *Critical Inquiry* n22 (Summer 1996) and their

rejoinder to Tim Dean's criticisms, "Single-World versus Plural-World Antiessentialism" *Critical Inquiry* n23 (Summer 1997).

¹³ I discuss this claim in the Introduction. The exception is the currently fashionable field of post(structural)humanism-inspired critical pedagogy, most prolifically represented by the work of Henry Giroux and associated with Paulo Freire. What this work shares with less overtly political educational research is however an almost 'taken-for-granted' anti-essentialism, which in my opinion manifests a return-of-the-repressed in the form of a humanist individualism. This thesis' assertive essentialism is perhaps exaggerated in order to counter the prevalence of this uncritical anti-essentialism.

¹⁴ This thesis abounds and in many ways struggles to contain these sorts of interrelations: that is, those situations in which learning can be instructively analogised with reference to X, but where X also is instructively analogised with reference to learning. When the analogy goes in both directions like this it becomes dangerously labile and must be mimetologically controlled (see P.Lacoue-Labarthe's account of hyperbologic in *Typography: Mimesis, Politics, Philosophy* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989] and A.Warminski's account of chiasmus in *Readings in Interpretation* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986]) by either dialectics or hermeneutics (hence Gadamer's revival of *Bildung*: see *Truth and Method* [London: Sheed & Ward, 1989]). I have attempted – and failed – to control this relational situation through extended endnotes. There is something of the essence of learning manifested in this phenomenon however, that is, in the way in which learning encourages these sorts of reversals. For example R.Slavin ed., *Learning to Co-operate: Co-operating to Learn* [New York: Plenum, 1985], H.Lyon *Learning to Feel, Feeling to Learn* [Columbus: Merrill, 1971], S.Singh *Learning to Read, Reading to Learn* [Amersham: Hulton Institute, 1976], Curriculum Development Centre *Learning to Write, Writing to Learn* [Canberra: Curriculum Development Centre, 1983], G.Dow *Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn* [London: Routledge, 1979] S.Maclure & P.Davies eds *Learning to Think, Thinking to Learn* [Oxford: Pergamon, 1991].

¹⁵ For instance Alain Badiou opens his *L'être et l'événement* [Paris: Gallilée, 1994] with one of his guiding assumptions being that "Heidegger is the last universally recognizable philosopher." (7) The claim that 'Heidegger' is rather one of the first non-philosophers (see for instance the opening of P.Lacoue-Labarthe's *Heidegger, Art and Politics* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990]) is, it must be admitted, a very philosophical claim.

¹⁶ This realisation in fact occurred to me when doing parallel work on deconstruction as a form of learning, and in particular on the way of reading Derrida required to avoid merely casting him as a skeptic. This work drew on Stanley Cavell's powerful suggestion that skeptical claims must be read as *ethical* provocations not epistemological assertions: in other words, the skeptic is risking contradiction in order to *teach and learn* how to be rather than what is – see "Knowing and Acknowledging" in *Must we Mean what we Say?* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976]. For

this reading of deconstruction see S.Melville's *Philosophy Beside Itself* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986]. See also David Wood's hesitantly questioning essays about the 'following' that Derrida's texts demand if one is to learn from them: e.g., "Following Derrida" in J.Sallis ed., *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987].

¹⁷ It should also be noted that in addition to the argument about to be summarised, research no longer included in this thesis attempted a further defense of my hypothesis about the institutional essence of learning by explaining how the process of Ph deconstruction is best understood as being an act of essential learning; which is why, whilst criticising Heidegger for his residual metaphysicality, deconstructions themselves continue to be haunted by certain metaphysical traits.

¹⁸ Following convention, I am using the italicised version of *praxis* (and the clumsy adjective *praxical* and even the adverb *praxically*) to reference the Ancient Greek and in particular Aristotelian understanding of the term, as opposed to the modern misappropriation of Marxist praxis, where it often only means applied theory, or at best, theory-in-practice. In using *praxis* and attempting to identify it with *phýsis* and differentiate it from *poiésis* in relation to *techné*, it needs to be admitted that these distinctions are mostly pedagogical, designed to assist the learning of the institutional essence of learning: in other words, there is no strictly philological claim here about how the Ancient Greeks understood these terms, not unless such a claim assists us moderns in learning *praxis* in some way.

¹⁹ I am referring to Lyotard's reading (see "The Sign of History" in G.Bennington ed., *Poststructuralism and the Question of History* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987]) of Kant's second part of *The Conflict of the Faculties* entitled "An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?", which from the context of this thesis asks, "How can we learn if we are learning?"

²⁰ Heidegger throughout his work suffers this same problem: whether what needs to be learned is best learned by keeping the original term and changing its meaning or developing a new word for the new meaning. The famous example is the rhetorical question "Should we still keep the name 'humanism' for a 'humanism' that contradicts all previous humanism – although it in no way advocates the inhuman.... Or should thinking, by means of open resistance to 'humanism', risk a shock that could for the first time cause perplexity concerning the *humanitas* of *homo humanus* and its basis?" (LoH 263) Heidegger tended toward the second strategy, renaming the human *Dasein* and technology *Gestell* for instance.

²¹ I do not believe that it is coincidental that one of the readers most attentive to the reflexive learning strategies at work in Heidegger's text, Christopher Fynsk, is also one of those whose early work at least, insisted upon the transformatory nature of poststructuralism – though I've no idea whether his career attested to these demands: see "A Decelebration of Philosophy" in *Diacritics* (June, 1978), "Legacies of May" in *Modern Language Notes* and his essay on the work of Gerard

Granel “But Suppose we were take the Rectoral Address Seriously...” in *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* v14-15 n2-1 (1991). See also the work of the *Boundary 2* editorial team of the 1980s (e.g., Bové, Arac, Spanos), and the work of Gayatri Spivak.

²² See Bill Readings’ *The University in Ruins*.

²³ Verena Conley observes that ecological sentiments in the context of Ph are subject to a *persiflage* along the lines of Gide’s well-known “*C’est avec de bons sentiments qu’on fait de la mauvaise littérature.*” (*Ecopolitics: The Environment in Poststructuralist Thought* [London: Routledge, 1997], 2.

²⁴ An initial aim for this Preface which I have not been able to fulfill was to demonstrate what I believe to be a crucial aspect of the institutional essence of learning and one which I certainly would personally identify as that through which I learned my way into Ph. I am speaking about what has been called by Nancy Miller ‘theorising the personal’ in *Getting Personal* [New York: Routledge, 1991]. This is an explicitly pedagogic strategy that autobiographically narrativises the reflexivity incumbent upon Ph thinking. Occurring in more overtly political contexts, such as deconstructive feminism and queer theory, this form of learning often aims to further the Marxist praxis of critical theory through Lacanian psychoanalysis. Theorising the personal thus brings the notion of transference to Brechtian didactic self-consciousness in order to disclose the erotic qualities of instruction. The best work in this area is by Jane Gallop, someone from whom I would like to think that I have learned much. See for example, *Thinking through the Body* [Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1988] and the collection of essays edited by Gallop *Pedagogy: The Question of Impersonation* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995]. See also R.Barreca & D.Morse eds *The Erotics of Instruction* [Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997], and S.Todd ed *Learning Desire: Perspectives on Pedagogy, Culture and the Unsaid* [New York: Routledge, 1997]. See also Shoshana Felman’s seminal work “Psychoanalysis and Education: Teaching Terminable and Interminable” now in *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987] and her later work on “Testimony: or the Vicissitudes of Educating” now in *Testimony* [New York: Routledge, 1992]. See also the *College English* issues (v49 n6 & 7) dedicated to the issue of psychoanalysis and education. All this work, with its elaboration of the projection necessary for one to learn (how to essentially change through therapy for instance), and its performative demonstration of the figuration that facilitates that learning transfer (i.e., the mimetological model of the master, the subject-presumed-to-know who says ‘be like me, do not be like me’ so that ‘where it was, there I will come to be’ – see amongst others, Borch-Jacobsen’s *Lacan: The Absolute Master* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991], is a powerful corroboration of what this thesis is arguing. I do not however go into these more erotic versions of the *willing* that I believe is essential to process of learning.

²⁵ These two strategies of essentialising derive from the way Heraclitus instituted the process of philosophising as the holding together, i.e., *learning*, of opposites as the Same, without (i.e., before Hegelian) dialectical Identity. Heraclitus’ assertions that $\therefore \delta \Delta Y \therefore \Gamma \zeta \Omega \Upsilon \Upsilon \Upsilon \Upsilon \Upsilon \Upsilon$ “what

opposes unites” (Fragment 8) and that ΛΟΙΛΜΨΔΤΜΥΩΥ Εα] ∴ φ “one differing from itself” is in agreement with itself because of an essential ΕΙΣΓΥ ∴ ΨΩΞΩΖ “back-turning” (Fragment 51) are taken by this thesis to refer to the process of essential learning, as opposed to the ΕΩΣ]ΤΗΠΓΟΥ “mass of learning” that is merely a ΠΙΡΩ ∴ ΜΥΓΟΥ “disreputable production” (Fragment 129) from which no-one can be taught understanding (Fragment 40). (I am using, but in the last case modifying, T.Robinson’s translations in Herclitus *Fragments* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987].) As Heidegger explains with reference to the Greek notion of ‘system’, learning makes the difference between what is merely piled together and what manifests jointure.

Introduction

Thesis Learning

Man is that inability to remain and unable to leave his place. In projecting, the Da-sein in him constantly *throws* him into possibilities and thereby keeps him *subjected* to what is actual. Thus thrown in this throw, man is a *transition*, transition as the fundamental essence of occurrence. Man is history, or better, history is man. Man is *enraptured* in this transition and therefore essentially '*absent*'. Absent in a fundamental sense – never simply at hand, but absent in his essence, in his *essentially being away*, removed into *essential having been* and *becoming* – essentially absencing and never at hand, yet *existent* in his essential absence. *Transposed* into the possible, he must constantly *be mistaken* concerning what is actual. And only because he is thus mistaken and transposed can he become *seized by terror*. And only where there is the perilousness of being seized by terror do we find the bliss of astonishment – being torn away in that wakeful manner that is the breath of all philosophising.

Heidegger *Fundamental Concepts in Metaphysics*

The Preface deliberately represented the learning behind this thesis, and which this thesis seeks to put forward, in a personal manner. It attempted to delimit the scope of the thesis and give it a certain necessity by gathering it around or passing it through the figure of the one presenting it with the hope of inducing a projected identification. Before turning to the focused content of this thesis, namely Heidegger, this Introduction will re-present the hypothesis of this thesis in somewhat more abstract terms, attempting to give it the necessity of an independent argument. These are intended to be demonstrations of the two versions of the same institutional essence of learning, as that which projects the necessity of what is thereby being learned.^{1*}

This Introduction explicitly works through the Abstract of this thesis, quoting (in **bold**) and then elaborating its condensed formulations. This Introduction, in line with the formal requirements of a doctoral dissertation, also attempts to situate this thesis in relation to relevant major areas of current thought, and explain what its original

* Endnotes commence on page 55.

contribution to these fields might be. A final section of this Introduction previews the content of the chapters that make up this thesis.

Synopsis

It is generally believed that we live in an age of unprecedented change. It is felt that the change is both rapid and pervasive: things are not only changing their respective fields, but that change is also traversing fields, interrelating previously disparate areas of activity and understanding. It is this mix of convergent and divergent changes that is thought to make our times distinct, changing everything, even the nature of change itself.² There is increasingly the belief that nothing will or even does any longer remain constant. No essences can survive the current rate and scale of change.

In such times, it is generally felt that the most crucial thing is the ability to learn. To survive we must each have the ability to learn across all our various interrelatedly changing domains of work and life: we must each be able to learn to change, to learn from change, in change. In our changing times then, learn-ability, the general ability to learn anything, anywhere, anyhow, the ability to learn the ability to learn in any situation, is vital.³ This is why calls for education are so pervasive today, to the point of exhaustion. Education is panacea these days, the solution to every problem.⁴

In this anti-essentialist age of change then, learning is perhaps one of the most essential things left, servicing all the desires that continue to drive modern existence. Learning too is currently subject to enormous change, and it is asserted that there is no longer a determinable essential type of learning.⁵ The idea of a general education has given way to a series of disparate, non-consensual, technical competencies.⁶ But precisely in this continued faith in neutral techniques, it is apparent that learning itself, as the competency to acquire competencies, is still thought to be the only thing that lies outside change, as the key to any change, here or coming.⁷ When nothing else can be relied on, it is almost as if we need to maintain a last essentialism, holding on to learning as a weakened essence, a quasi-transcendental, para-universal near-constant that will get us through whatever situations arise.⁸

The ambiguity of this situation manifests as a refusal to investigate the essence of learning. Although learning is invoked at every occasion, it is for this very reason, always called up in an unquestioning way. Learning simply is; that is, learning is simply there to be done. Whilst or because learning is inherent to every human activity, it is conspicuously

taken for granted as that which merely or ‘naturally’ happens. If educationalists do investigate learning, it is mostly in terms of particular experiences or techniques, in the pursuit of immediately implementable improvements in learning-in-action’s efficient effectivity.⁹ The essence of learning is thought to be obvious, irrelevant and/or non-existent: there is today only a plurality of learnings, each of which function more-or-less in different ways in different circumstances. Asking after the foundation of learning – What is learning? (How) is learning possible? (Why) is learning necessary? – is not only considered unnecessary or impossible, it can even be thought to be an obstacle to the various forms of learning that need to be done in their discrete ways. The activism driving the demand for education therefore, the practical urgency that makes it currently the most essential thing around, is exactly what refuses any interrogation as to learning’s essence.

Nevertheless, the issue of a learning essentialism persists. *To learn, I must always already have learned how to learn, and learned how to learn how to learn, and so on.* To learn from experience for instance, which is still considered the central model for all learning,¹⁰ I must not only have learned how to experience in a learning way, which also entails having learned what amounts to the experience of having-learned, but perhaps even how to experience in the first place. If learning is eventually to take place, then this learning-to-learn recursion must be halted at some point.¹¹ Every occurrence of learning therefore depends upon a belief in some type of transcendent learning, a learning that totalises and exceeds itself, surpassing the learning of ‘x’ with a ‘learning in general’ that is the very possibility of learning – or to personalise this essentialism, an ability to learn, inherent in the learner and the situation to be learned with, in and/or from. A certain essentialism is essential to the existence of every event of learning.

These essentialisms at work in each occurrence of learning are often readily discernible, being mostly a naturalism (learning is innate¹²), or more precisely a mechanism (a biological systemicism – learning is differential adaptation, structural coupling, negentropic equilibrium¹³), or else a humanism (learning is the defining quality of us speaking animals¹⁴), or more precisely a theology (the teleologically developmental universality of reason¹⁵). These sorts of essentialisms however, precisely because of the recurrency within which they occur, because they are what has *always already* happened, are withdrawn, *metaphysical*.¹⁶ The decisive metaphysic that is learning’s origin and end in each case, as that which we have always already learnt about learning that thereby allows learning to happen, disappears beneath learning’s activities. This is why fundamental

questions about learning are therefore thought to be redundant: nothing can be learned from trying to learn about such essential learning.

The result is thus a now common Heideggerian paradox; despite, or because of, the prevalence of learning – the constant demands for active education – learning itself, in essence, as a thematic issue of interrogation, is fundamentally missed and even disavowed. This thesis is thus tempted to arrogate in a Heideggerian fashion, that, in these most learning-laden of times, no-one is yet learning; there is therefore the distressful need to ask anew the question – which has today been forgotten, although our time again considers itself progressive in affirming the need for learning – of the meaning of learning, of what is called learning, the fundamental questions, problems and concepts of learning; for ‘you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression ‘learning’; we however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed.’¹⁷

This thesis begins from the belief that it is currently essential for us to relearn the essence of learning.

All this however is now becoming unavoidable. Our changing circumstances are forcing us to face up to the essence of learning. If the imperative is now to learn to change, then without asking how it is that we learned our way into a situation that requires learning to change, we will not be able to learn our way out.¹⁸ And without having learned all that characterizes our current situation, including the nature of the learning made available to us in our current situation, we will never be able to learn whether we have in fact learned to change. To change, we need to learn not merely *if* we are in fact learning to change, but how to actively *unlearn* how we have been, even relearning how to learn.

Similarly, in situations of interrelatedness, where areas with previously distinct forms of learning converge and hybridize, which learning to use will always be an issue, as will the possibility that we in fact need to learn wholly new ways of learning more appropriate to our changed and interrelated domains. Current concerns obsess about *what* it is that we should be learning. But behind these worries lie more pressing questions about what *it is possible to learn* with current ways of learning: do we need to learn other ways of learning before we can learn something different, let alone learn to become something different?

If this is the case, our ability to learn our way out of our current circumstances could be obstructed: it may well be that our problem is in fact our way of learning. All our learning could be just the relearning of the same, under instruction from the same

delimited metaphysic, so that nothing is actually being learned because we have foreclosed on the need to learn essentially about learning, to relearn the essence of learning.

In response to this possibility – the possibility of a necessity, that is, the possibility that in order to learn to change, in order take this decisive action, it may be necessary that we relearn the essence of learning – this thesis is asking: what is the essence of learning? The intention is to counter the pragmatic and inherent refusal by the currently operational learning essentialism to question the essence of learning. Only in this way will we be able to learn how learning can deliver change *and not merely respond to it in the same learnt ways*.

If the currently pertinent question is therefore, What do we need to learn?, this project is insisting that this firstly be understood as a question about how learning occurs: What do we need *in order to* learn? What do we now need to learn *about the nature of learning*, if we are to learn to change? What is now essential to learn(ing)?

To commence this task, this thesis works with the assumption that the essence of learning lies in the way learning can be ontological, changing the essence of what is, and instituting a new ‘what is’.

In seeking to learn what underlies the various ways in which learning currently manifests – seeking the unity or *koinon* that holds together, even if only analogically, the *pollachos* that is learning’s various manifestations – this thesis risks trying to be a pandect. Clearly in the face of the demand for learning, in the near-frantic search for *that* (non)essential learning activity that will work in these changing pluralistic times, a plague of learning types, techniques and styles has developed. To maintain the Heideggerian arrogance, most of these ‘new’ learnings are so inessential that they are only worth noting as evidence of the absence of essential thinking about learning. If an aspect of the essence of learning these days is for it to be one of the last essentials in these anti-essentialist times, then in all likelihood, in its indiscriminate application, the essence of learning may well have been emptied out or worn away.

However, even of those forms of learning that are still worth learning about, only a few have so far been examined by the project of which this thesis is a part. But enough has been covered to begin to learn a useful delimitation as to what the essence of learning might be – and as with the positing of any essence, this means discriminating against much of what passes as learning.

Such an essence needs to be able, at the least, to account for the ways in which learning can be:

- directed by a teacher and/or self-directed, social and/or individual, a type of following and/or inventing
- active and/or passive, spontaneous and/or by rote drilling, imitative and/or model fashioning
- conscious and/or unconscious, cognitive and/or behavioural, generative of knowledge and/or mere change
- discrete and/or on-going, superficial and/or structural, focussed on something in particular and/or totalising of everything

There is certainly no ‘respectively’ implied here, and these are not even oppositions. The essence of learning therefore cannot be gen(us)erated from some sublative middle way, nor can it be presupposed as some meted-out superlative that is not of any of these.

Given the current context of change outlined above, the research for this thesis has focused on the more extensive types of learning, in the expectation that these more expansive or substantial instances of learning will yield an essence of learning of which other types of learning are only less ambitious or less thorough versions. In other words, an account of learning’s most extreme possibilities should be able to explain its more regular occurrences.

The starting point for this thesis’ research has therefore been the fact that learning can involve or result in essential change. In other words, learning can be ontological: it can lead to a change in the totality of ‘what is’. I can learn an essence, in such a way that it informs all that exists; I can learn to see everything as an instance of that essence, so much so that I can forget that ‘as-ness’ and my ‘having-learned it’ and will then insist that that ‘essence’ is there *already* in that existent thing, irrespective of me; *and then I can unlearn that essence* and learn another, and see everything differently, or rather, everything will then be different, so different that it will be *as if it had always been that way and I had never learned otherwise*. What is learning that it can change everything, including itself?

This thesis is therefore concerned with ontological learning. From now on, the term ‘learning’ will always be taken to mean the sort of learning that happens with ontological change; for the purposes of this thesis, the sort of learning that is not ontological is not a learning, in the authentic sense.

The hypothesis then is that: the essence of learning is the learning of essence. Learning is essentially essential, essentially concerned with the learning of what is (then) essential. Learning is essentially ontological, so that, in essence, any learning is learning

that something is, that something is necessary, or necessarily is. Learning can make the learned into something that has the status of 'what is'. Learning can result in more than knowledges, understandings, behaviours, attitudes or values. It can even deliver something more than a new perspectival world-view. It can change how 'what is' actually, or rather essentially, is. It can institute what appears never to have been instituted, what then appears to have so-always-been-there that it has the status of what must be there, now and forever.

In this way, learning can occasion the wholly new appearance of something, literally bringing something into being. In short learning can create: and it can create the necessary and the essential; it can necessitate and essentialise. And this can be regional or it can be relationally totalising, instituting a whole new order of things for either an individual or a whole generation. Learning is therefore very properly a type of beginning, an instauration, an institution, a birthing.¹⁹

This thesis is thus an attempt to take account of the radical constructivism that is the unavoidable anthropocentrism of such essential learning.

To gain a full sense of what learning as a way of ontologising means, it is necessary to take account of the converse implications. If learning can make the learned into 'what is', then 'what is' is the learned. The implication is that there is only the learned; nothing is unless *we* have learned it to be, unless we have learned how what it is can be, that is, can be experienced by us as 'what (it) is'. What this means is what this thesis believes any fundamental thinking of learning must learn.

This thesis aims to show, as will be explained shortly, that this anthropocentrism is thoroughly finitudinal.²⁰ But for now, it is worth emphasising the more shunned nihilistic aspects of this understanding of our foundation in learning, in learning's foundationality. At its most extreme then, what is at stake involves acknowledging that within learning lies the possibility of learning anything into being. This does not mean that there is only what we know or do. This would be to turn an ontic sense of learning (or a culturally, socio-economically and historically specific representation of the human, i.e., as a knower and/or a doer) into its essence: learning is not merely a form of knowing or doing. Nevertheless, exactly as something more than knowing or doing, learning is, this thesis is suggesting, that by which what is, is.

As part of the history of metaphysics, the Twentieth Century has been instructive in this regard. We western moderns teach ourselves that we are thoroughly realist, only

learning what is already there. At the most a few Platonic-Kantians would claim that we can also learn more and more the true and the good, that is, increasingly realising reasonableness.²¹ However, the history of the Twentieth Century has testified to our ability to teach ourselves things that patently aren't there and that are manifestly wrong and evil. The second half of the Twentieth Century in particular has seen this essential aspect of learning manifest as a Technologism. In this case, we have very literally developed a process whereby we have learnt to construct new forms of existence (whether by genetic engineering or contamination, theoretical science, computer programming, media saturation, etc), altering ours and everything else's nature. We must therefore learn that the power and danger of technology derives from the way it teaches us, that is, the way we have learnt to learn from it, to grant what it constructs the status of what is, essential. More than any other century perhaps – insofar as by now, the west should have learned better – the Twentieth Century indicates the ontological power of learning, the fact that we can and do construct essences that despite their having been constructed have all the force of essences, totally reorganising our existence, ending others'.

The currently dominant educationalist theory, constructivism,²² goes some way toward this task, but shies away in the end. It is no coincidence that constructivism was developed as an explicitly educational theory initially with respect to mathematical education, *mathematics* being, according to Heidegger, the exemplary form of the modern learning project.²³ It is also no coincidence that constructivism has become the pervasive educational discourse because of its axial role in the theorisation of the increased application of computers in education.²⁴ At its mildest constructivism is an epistemological assertion about how individuals learn: it is necessary for each individual to construct for themselves the discovery or justification of some knowledge or skill in order for them to truly learn it,²⁵ which means here to be able to transfer it, both in the sense of extend it into other domains of application and to teach it to others.²⁶ Social constructivism adds to this an intersubjective dimension: learning involves becoming a constructive part of a community that sustains the learnt knowledges and skills.²⁷ Constructivism however, with the risk of solipsism in the first case, and historical-cultural relativism in the second, is hard pressed to resist the more ontological implications of this understanding of learning. Radical constructivism is the consequent acknowledgment that if it is possible to construct something and thereby learn it, in the process erasing its having-been-constructed, then it

is possible that all that is, whether for an individual, a community or beyond, comprises learned-constructions, and that it is only by having-been learned that 'what is' is.²⁸

This thesis believes in the need to push radical constructivism as far as it can go. Whilst constructivism is by definition anti-essentialist, relearning how essences are constructed, this thesis is interested to re-emphasise that the learned, even or especially when constructivistically learned, can nonetheless take on all the qualities of an essence. By learning, we can construct essences for ourselves. Even more significantly, as will be indicated below, this process, this constructing-in-order-to-learn does, as it must, intentionally seek to construct an essence: it is constructivistic *by way of essences*. This thesis is therefore suggesting that learning is radically constructivist, but the radicality is here a type of counter-revolutionary re-essentialising of constructivism. This thesis is suggesting that constructivism's instrumentalism claims an anti-essentialism for itself that conceals its own essence, that is, its own essential dependence upon operating with essences. In a philosophical context, constructivism tends to conceal the idealism or romanticism to which it is indebted by appropriating a very technological appearance: it covers over its formative cultivation in German *Bildung* with some naïvely pragmatic tropes of building.²⁹ This thesis is thus attempting to retrieve the unavoidable metaphysics that are the essential foundations lying beneath the very possibility of constructing anything by learning.

As a consequence, this thesis is embracing the metaphysicality that can thus be seen to be essential to the radical constructivism of ontological learning.³⁰ Educational research is invariably haunted by the dream of delivering the perfect technique, the form of learning which, if not applicable to any and every content, is at least totally applicable, without any 'side-effects', to some particular content.³¹ Constructivism for instance makes this claim in an underhand way through a combination of individualism, technology and consensus democracy. This thesis, rather than deny this desire or veil it in the modesty of empirical case studies, is, as may already be apparent very explicitly courting this will-to-transcendence. The rationale is that it is not only *not possible* to think about learning without having this dream-about-learning, but that – and this is the thesis of this thesis – that it is precisely this dream, this '*will-to-...-above-and-beyond*', that powers every learning, no matter how mundane the to-be-learned. Learning is transcendence, a transcendence that begins with a will-to-transcendence. *And if there is any transcendence* (e.g., essence, necessity, metaphysics), *then it is only possible through and as learning*.

The philosophical teachings of Martin Heidegger are brought to bear on this question concerning learning.

Given the nature of this project, the teachings of Heidegger became unavoidable. As attempts to think through the ontological transcendence that binds humans and beings, essences and existence, and as repeated confrontations with the metaphysical nihilism of Technology that we moderns have learned to make our destiny, Heidegger is almost overdetermined as source for this thesis. In the context of this thesis then, Heidegger is relearned as teacher of learning, someone who teaches us about the essentiality of learning, or more overtly, about the learnedness of what is essential, about how ‘what is’ comes to be learned as what is, as a manifestation of an epochal metaphysics. It is from Heidegger then that we can learn about the ontology of learning.

This thesis is also proposing the obverse: that Heidegger can be better understood via learning, that his conflation of epistemology (questions of truth) with ontology (questions of being) makes more sense in relation to a strong anthropocentric understanding of learning. The various statements that Heidegger made about the relation between Being and human being, about whether Being, or even a certain part of Being (nature, earth, *Ereignis*, etc), is or isn’t able to be beyond *Da-sein* and its relational worlding or languaging, then become, in terms of the ontologicality of learning, instructive rather than ambiguous or contradictory.

This thesis suggests that on the one hand, the way in which Heidegger teaches, teaches us that learning is a process of instituting, a formative projection of necessities that metaleptically installs what is essential.

What this thesis learns by turning to Heidegger is that essential learning, following the model of Heidegger’s teachings, is the project of explicitly learning essences. Learning involves the projection of necessities, the thesis assertion of both the necessity of learning and the necessity of the to-be-learned. Learning begins by declaring itself to be accessing and installing what is essential and this projection is then actively sustained or instituted. What Heidegger contributes to the question concerning learning is a demonstration of the way learning results in essences by *proceeding in an explicit fashion via essentiality*.³²

This means that learning has something essentially willed about its occurrence. With Heidegger, the nature of this learning-intention is clarified. The whole point of this thesis rides to a certain extent upon coming to understand what is distinctive about Heidegger’s use of intentionality, as differentiated from, for instance, the more abstracted notion of

intentionality in Husserl's eidetic reductions,³³ the more absolute notion of Hegel's "onto-theo-ego-ological" spirit,³⁴ the emptiness of Kant's formal transcendence and Nietzsche's more self-aggrandizing urge (I will take up Heidegger's relation to the last two in Part Two). Crudely, the intention at work in learning (with/in/from) Heidegger is more than a Husserlian science, less than Nietzschean art and something like a more Kantian version of Hegel's sublative appropriation of *Bildung*. This thesis will speak of 'the project of learning' to summarise this sense of intention.

There is a polemic here in regard to how Heidegger's work is currently being taught. A dominant interpretation foregrounds Heidegger's later work where the emphasis falls on what gets portrayed as a type of non-willed post-metaphysical thinking. This thesis attempts to retrieve the much avoided middle period of Heidegger's work, throughout the 1930s, when the need for a strongly willed form of philosophising was most explicitly emphasised. It suggests that only an understanding of learning in terms of this more Aristotelian and Nietzschean work can bring together the early and late work, and especially save the later work from performative contradiction.

This thesis is thus opposing, for example, the reading of Heidegger on technology which suggests that we must merely learn the essence of technology from a disposition of letting-be. To do this risks 'confronting' that which is essentially changing things (not least learning) with what is essentially an unchanged form of humanist learning. This cannot result in a merely coping compliance at the least and an anachronistic redundancy at the most. We will be changed into the reductively unchanging by what we have set in place, unless we learn to change, that is to say, change into those who can change what we have set in place, unlearn what we are being taught by what we have learnt. We must relearn how to learn, essentially; for, only in this way will we be able to *teach techno-science what to learn, rather than simply learn responses to what techno-science teaches*. This is what this thesis understands by Heidegger's notion of *Verwindung*, the recovery of metaphysics, rather than the overcoming (*Überwindung*) of metaphysics: the turning that is necessary in relation to techno-humanism is one of learning, and that learning is not an abdication of will, but a more self-conscious willing, a mode of being that is more honest about the unavoidability of willing.

On the other hand, what is thereby learned with and from Heidegger clarifies that this process of learning is a reflexively finitudinal *praxis*, a thingly effort that must be performed anew every time and can never be taken-as-finished.

Clearly though, Heidegger's is not a mere promotion of willing. What this thesis shows is that the process of learning is thoroughly reflexive. This means that despite, or rather because of its essentiality, learning is an inherently finitudinal exercise. It is never a matter of merely employing the process of learning as a means to an end, the attainment of which then allowing learning to be set aside for another time. The ontologicality of learning means, we learn from Heidegger, that being is learning; existence, *Da-sein*, being-there, is a process of learning that cannot ever not be in the process of learning. We can learn to forget or conceal this essential aspect of being, but we are nevertheless always already and still (a) learning. This is why Heidegger always insists that whilst human being is a project, it is always a thrown project, something that is thrown into projecting, into being projectively, and that owning up to this, being authentic, means resolving to make a project of what one is (thrown into), learning the nature of one's thrown Situation and thereby learning with and through that Situation, essentially changing the nature of things.

This thesis attempts to capture this reflexive finitude by calling up the Aristotelian sense of *praxis* which many commentators, mostly influenced by Arendt's way of learning from Heidegger, believe that Heidegger's fundamental ontology was developed to teach. The crucial point that this thesis seeks to underline is that *praxis*, for all its finitude, is nonetheless a directed action, precisely in a self-conscious way, a making appear that depends upon a certain pre-disposition.

This means that the 'freedom' to change the essence of 'what is' by learning is never merely available to us.

It was noted above that it is a mistake to ontologise one inessential aspect of learning, knowing or doing for instance, in order to think that the anthropocentrism of learning reduces all that is to what we know or do. However, since learning is ontologising, it needs to be granted that we nevertheless can and do teach ourselves such reductivistic mistakes. It is precisely because of learning's radical constructivism that we are able to teach ourselves that learning is only realist, or utopianly teleological.

In fact, even though we do teach ourselves these sorts of reductivisms about learning, talking ourselves into its inessentiality, at another level, we do admit and even celebrate the essentially radical constructivism of learning. Many of us after all believe that, especially

these days, anything is possible, that we can teach ourselves (to do, make, change) anything. For a technological age, there is perhaps nothing radical about radical constructivism. Positivist philosophers might still need to learn this, but most other people in free-market democracies already live in – *or at least live through, needing to believe in* – elements of the more radical constructivist side to essential learning.³⁵

In this case, these relativistic aspects to the essence of learning need to be supplemented by taking account of learning's more finitudinal aspects. This thesis suggests that in fact many of our current problems derive from an unquestioned, because disavowed, faith in an essentialist learning. This is what Technology for instance embodies that makes it dangerous. We must learn the radical constructivism of learning in order to learn to recognise it at work in technology as the concealed and therein unrestricted essence of technology, that which we must learn to reappropriate if we are to turn Technology around and teach it to be less inhumane. We moderns have taught ourselves in a certain way the anthropocentrism of learning but only by unlearning the limits that come with that essence of learning, which as this thesis hopes to show amounts to a reconcealment of that anthropocentricity. Precisely because we take for granted the essential ability of learning to deliver change, we are not changing, that is to say, we are not yet essentially learning, learning to change. Until we learn the full implications of the essence of learning, we will not be able to learn our way out of our current learned learning ontology. There are thus other fundamental aspects of learning or rather, other aspects to the fundamentals of learning, that also need to be relearned if we are to learn to change.

These derive from the fact that, if 'what is' is essentially the learned, the converse also holds: the learned has the status of 'what essentially is'. If learning is a process of necessitating, then the (already-)learned is what is necessary for us. If learning has succeeded then the learned represents a limit or at least an obstacle to subsequent fundamental learning for change. The (already-)learnt can even take on all the resistance of materiality: things are what they are insofar as we have learned them, that is to say, insofar as we have learned their thingliness, their constancy as such-and-such a thing, as Chapter Two will try to show via Heidegger's work on the thing.

Learning's limitlessness is therefore only a possibility, a necessary possibility, that is, an essential part of learning, but one that is nonetheless always existentially limited. What is possible is not always practicable, because previous learnings will have set in place what is essential and necessary for any learner. We are therefore not immediately free to use the

absolute freedom that lies within learning. Each new learning must firstly struggle against the currently existing 'learnt'.

This goes back to what was said earlier, concerning the essential withdrawal of learning through the always-alreadiness of the having-learnt-to-learn. This is why it is essential to learn what essentialism of learning is currently operational, why every learning to change must proceed by way of unlearning and relearning the essence of learning. Whilst there is a general ability to learning insofar as anthropocentrism means ontological learnability, this ability must be relearned each time in relation to what is (currently able to be learned).

What we now need to relearn therefore is the essentiality of learning. The technological humanism of the Twentieth Century evidences the anthropocentrism that is essential to learning, but it functions only via a concealed learning essentialism, one that learns by denying its essentiality, and more significantly by denying the essentiality of what is learned. What is currently happening is that we are learning in a constructivist sense, but only by concealing the essentiality of the learnt, which is to say, an essentialising that sustains constructivism despite its anti-essentialist self-perceptions. In short we are literally unlearning, unlearning what is the learnt for us by learning it merely as what is (distinct from our having-learned-it). This is most evident in the current anti-materialism or virtualisation of the world which is unlearning the learnedness of things in its drive toward totally manipulable representations. This learning will thus never attain *radical* constructivism because it is never taking on the learned in its learnedness, in the necessity of its learntness. It is merely hoping to learn or believing that it is learning. Hence our current situation: we are learning more and more every day, without actually learning, without (re)learning (from) what we have learnt, without (re)learning how to (re)learn; which means that we are only ever learning more of the same, never learning to change, that is to say, only ever *relearning*, never *relearning*.

We must relearn the extent to which we are cycling within a restricted essence of learning in order to learn our way out of that cycle. Until we learn the extent of the currently operational learning essentialism, we will not be able to learn to construct, that is, construct to learn, an alternative.

Essential learning involves making-necessary in a sustained manner over-and-against what currently has been learnt-as-necessary, that is, 'what presently is'.

Essential learning is thus demonstrated to be a deliberately formative act. In performing learning in an essential way, this learning exposes the essentiality of the learnt that the more deceptively anthropocentric version of learning erases. It leads to substantial change, to authentic learning, not merely because it has willed more strongly, but because it has exposed itself to 'what is' in all its learned necessity. Learning can then be understood as a process of almost forcing the necessity of the to-be-learned – which cannot succeed directly, because it would always be apparent that such a necessity was artificially constructed – in such a way that the instituted necessity of the existing already-learnt is exposed. It is in this exposure that the chiasmus of learning occurs in which the already-learnt is learned in its institutional learntness allowing the to-be-learned to be instituted as a new necessity in its place. It is because essential learning must not only confront the existing learnt and its mode of learning, but also constitute a mode of learning such that the to-be-learned in turn becomes a newly necessary essential, that learning must actively work (with) essences.

Heidegger can thus be seen to be demonstrating how to learn what is instituted as essential, and then, having exposed the institutionalised learntness of what is essential, how to relearn by reinstituting new essentials. In terms of Heidegger's teachings then, this thesis will emphasise on the one hand their hermeticism and on the other their use of the everyday. To access the intra-relationality of the former, one must project the essentiality of what Heidegger is teaching and how he is teaching it. Having made this projection, and sustained it, one begins to learn the instituted learntness of the latter, that is the extent to which we have learned the necessity of what we take to be what is in everyday life. We are then in a position to institute new essences, to make what Heidegger is teaching a necessary part of what is, everyday. One therefore begins learning by projecting the necessity of Heidegger's teachings, and then learns what is thereby constructed to the point that one develops one's own set of necessary relations to it, allowing this constructed relational network to restructure one's own ontology.

In this context, the current anti-essentialism of learning theory is precisely what not only fails to confront the essentiality of the learnt, but what will, for that reason, never contribute to the learning of new essences. This anti-essentialism is then the essential aspect of the currently operational learning, that which must be essentially confronted, by relearning an essential form of learning.

This thesis therefore learns that learning is an avowed act of willing, but one which cannot and must not be represented as a technical economy under the control of a humanist subject.

The essential learning process therefore begins with the subject actively willing the to-be-learned in its necessity. In this way learning is essentially a process of teaching, of teaching oneself. Even when being taught, when submitting to a teaching, this submission is, according to this thesis, only a form of essential learning if the learners are in fact appropriating the teaching for themselves, taking it over, following as if they were in fact leading, projecting themselves out in front of what is being put before them.

On the other hand however, when learning has essentially happened, the process is a passivity beyond all forms of passivity, that is to say, beyond any passivity which a centred subject could choose to experience.³⁶ This is how the learned attains the resistant ontology of what is, of what even is in a thingly way. The subject that learns is then willing, in both senses: initially the learner is the willer, that which projects the to-be-learned and actively installs it; and then the learner is the willed, becoming sub-ject, that which is thrown under the having-happened of learning, that which is thrown before the learned in its alreadiness.

Learning is then essentially a strongly intentional process. Learning never just happens, but must be made to happen. However this in no way means that learning can merely be made to happen. What makes learning happen is a certain necessity. Learning must need to take place if it is to take place. What is to be learned and how it is to be learned must be projected as necessary. Only when such a need for learning is in place will the will to learn realise itself in a thoroughly formative way. Learning is then very much an act of compulsion, impelled by being compelled: it is made to happen because it must happen. In short, learning is a process of willing necessity, making a project of being thrown, an *amor fati*.

The willing *Dasein*, especially as the one that learns, is thus more sub-jected than centred. As a consequence, when learning represents thorough change, then the subject before and after such learning is radically disjunctural.³⁷ This is why trying to determine what you have essentially learned is impossible: having essentially learned, you are not in a position to access what you were, what was for you before having learned. In other words, there is no $\epsilon\Xi\Omega\text{PM}\Gamma\text{MY}\Omega\text{Y}$ or sub-stance to learning.

This is why learning must be understood as a *praxis* as opposed to *poiésis* which presumes an agent who remains outside the process, initiating the action and then receiving the finished product. Because of its reflexivity, the *praxical* agent only is (who he

or she is) through the process, appearing with what is thereby made to appear in sheer co-inter-dependence. A *praxis* is still a directed action, a project, however its utter situatedness means that it is finitudinally delimited in a way that is best understood as being, in its essence, middle-voiced.³⁸ There is learning; it is learned.

The misrepresentation of learning as a *poiésis* can in fact be understood as a manifestation of the current withdrawal of essential learning.

What is at stake in this thesis is therefore differentiating the projecting of learning from the projection of the (to-be-)learnt, the action of reflexively revealing thrownness through willing as opposed to the technique of subjectively representing objectives and outcomes, the instituting that learning ec-statically and participatorily accomplishes as opposed to the restitutive institution of learning.³⁹ The results of learning, learning as product, is what is currently concealing the essential process of learning. Which is not to say that learning is not happening; but that it is happening in ways that we cannot learn to appropriate and make proper to our being-in-the-world.

In the end, to try to capture what is being learned in this thesis, the process of essential learning is called 'design' as understood in relation to the current concern for sustainability.

To gather what is being learned (with/in/from Heidegger), this thesis concludes by offering a way of describing and two contexts for prescribing the anthropocentric *praxis* of learning. These are only mentioned briefly, as projects to be undertaken to sustain and further the learning that has been happening via this institutional thesis.

This thesis then suggests that learning can be described as a form of designing. The notion of design – one whose conceptual absence rivals learning's – usefully captures both the intentionality of learning and its relational and thingly finitude. What is (well) designed has the same withdrawing essentiality as the learnt, meaning that designing, like learning, must be an insistent *praxis* if it is to bring about essential change in the way we exist. Design to this extent is a better translation of *techné*, as the sort of authentic revealing *poiésis* that Heidegger proposes needs to be learned in the place of productivist Technology, than art, whose connotations of subjectively visual aesthetics are still part of the problem. This means that the essence of learning is less the art of learning, than learning as design.

This is pertinent, this thesis suggests, to the nature of things in our time as learned through current concerns about sustainability. Sustainability, as the necessary anthropocentricisation of environmentalism, represents an urgent demand for the

institutional essence of learning. What is sustainable is that which is able to (be) (re)learn(ed); and the ability to learn is the ability to sustain, the finitudinal responsibility for the whiling of things.

The Brief

It will already be apparent that several other philosophies in addition to Heidegger's could have been used to clarify and extend this thesis, but have not been incorporated into its final form. I have already mentioned that this thesis attempts to situate Heidegger's learning in relation to that which can be learned to be at work in the post-Kantianism⁴⁰ of Hegel,⁴¹ Nietzsche,⁴² and Husserl.

With regard to this post-Kantianism however, it is important to differentiate what is being left out of this thesis but needs to be dealt with, from what is being left out of this thesis because it is not compatible with the thesis. This thesis does not deal with the Enlightenment for instance, the reason being that according to the hypothesis of this thesis, it is the romanticism of the Enlightenment that gives it its modernising educative or reformatory power.⁴³ Put another way, if we have learnt from Kant it is not by rendering the sensible intelligible – as if the sensible were already actual in a pre-constructed form – but by making the intelligible, the constructed, sensible, that is, actual. We westerners learnt to be modern by a process of design; that is to say, we designed ourselves into being modern; we did not, for instance, talk ourselves or even convince ourselves into being modern. This is not to say that we have merely disciplined ourselves into being modern.⁴⁴ This thesis would emphasise the obverse of Foucault's archaeologies for example, so that education would no longer be considered to be merely one amongst other manifestations of a disciplinary regime but the paradigm of productive power, the 'power to' that must be appropriated by a *praxical* ethos of care. In this context, it should be mentioned that Dewey's whole philosophy is glaringly absent from this thesis; but there was never going to be the time or space in this work to negotiate his importantly complex relations to science and technology, especially the theory of evolution on the one hand, and to democracy on the other.⁴⁵

What is at stake here relates to why this thesis never deals with the more conventional communicatively informative aspects of learning. The notion of education as transmission of meaning merely begs the question: How does transmission occur? How does meaning mean? The answer in either case is still learning, which thus remains to be explained. This

thesis is trying to work against the whole privileging of intellection that is inherent in learning. Though essential learning is intentional, these intentions are never merely conscious conceptions. This representation(alist account) of learning is exactly dependent upon the technical existence of a subject outside the *praxis* of learning. Learning in essence works through and as a design know-how, an environmental relation to the ingrained necessity of what has been learnt as what currently is.

This critique of education as information transfer and consequent advocacy of learning as a *praxis*, characterises a major field of contemporary philosophy of education, what is known as critical or postmodern pedagogy.⁴⁶ This work is inspired either by the liberationist teachings of Paulo Freire, Foucault's genealogies, Bourdieu's reflexive sociologies, or Habermas' advocations of communicative *praxis*. The residual Marxism of these counter-educationalists foregrounds the materialistically institutional nature of education, and has resulted in the design of alternative learning environments and processes that accord with what this thesis is proposing. However, the proud anti-essentialism of these critical theorists blinds them, according to this thesis, to a unquestioned learning essentialism that might be called the 'Brechtian myth of the sufficiency of awareness'. Despite their motivating critique of the intellectualism of education, they tend, from the perspective of this thesis, to evidence a residual faith in the power of reflexive knowledge, a belief that knowing about the operation of a power allows a circumvention of that power. 'Conscientization' as Freire puts it, has not yet learned what sort of learning it would be that allows such reflections to have the ontological power of essential change.

The criticality of these discourses is however useful to this thesis insofar as it draws attention to the necessity of learning being a strong project, polemical and agonistic, as opposed to the representation of learning as a harmonious form of dialogue that is often put forward by hermeneuticians.⁴⁷ In attempting to overcome the restraint of what is currently the learnt, learning must strain with a force that is not normally compatible with dialogue. Learning is a more violent struggle than hermeneutics admits, more necessitous and essential, less receptive and plural.

Nevertheless all this foregrounding of the active side of the project of learning, the constructivist side of essentialising, should not be seen to be an advocacy of self-directed learning, which is hegemonic in educationalist discourse at the moment, especially in regard to the 'flexible learning' that is currently being made possible by information and

communication technologies and necessary by funding cuts. Because ‘self-direction’ usually contains too little reference to the projection of necessities, it does not yet access the essence of learning. Learning is a process of imposition. In teacher-directed learning, learning only occurs where the imposition is internalized, where the learner actively endorses the necessity of what is being projected for learning.⁴⁸ Institutional discipline is a useful, and for this thesis, exemplary instance of the heuristic use of the artificial necessity for learning. But nothing is learned if this constraint is not formatively re-enacted by the learner. A learning environment will not be one of autocratically induced compliance, but one of propagandised enthusiasm.⁴⁹ In self-directed learning, learning only occurs when the imposition is externalized, where the learner submits to an imperative that is not their own. If self-directed learning is about the recognition of needs, the function of these needs (as opposed to desires) is to make a necessity, connecting the learner’s own needs (what the learner believes he or she needs) with the situation’s needs (what is needed by the problem at hand) and even with the world’s needs (what is needed of the learner, the relation of this problem to all such problems and beyond). Without all these necessities, correlated into a guiding form, self-directed learning ends up being the learning of the same: the learner can only learn what they have already learnt that they can learn.

Outline

According to some, something is generally felt to be educational if it makes things clear, which requires that it itself be clear: clarity can only be accessed through clarity. If something is in ‘plain English’, it is considered ‘instructive’. In a certain way, this thesis is structured around the exact opposite notion. Both parts focus on the sort of learning that is required when dealing with different forms of abstraction or difficulty.

Part One, “Learning (with) ‘Heidegger’” examines what is required to learn how to understand Heidegger given how abstractly hermetic his teachings first appear to someone who has not yet learned how to ‘hear’ or ‘read’ his teachings. Heidegger makes it very clear from instructive introductions and asides that one must project the essentiality of what is happening in his teachings if one is to learn from them. The chapters in this first part of the thesis move back and forth over Heidegger’s various instructions in an attempt to discern the nature of the projection of necessity that his teachings demand from learners. They also attempt to set out some of the implications of these ways of approaching Heidegger, explaining how they change what it is that should be learned as what Heidegger

is teaching. The chapter concludes by testing what it has learned about the process of learning (with) 'Heidegger' against Heidegger's most significant methodological account of how to learn from what he is doing. This is the notion of 'formal indication', explicitly discussed in the early 20s and implicitly manifesting in all the later more poetic strategies he employs. Formal indication provides a clear account of the *praxis* of learning by which what is essential gets instituted.

Part Two, "Learning (in) 'Heidegger'" confronts the issue of the profound anthropocentrism at work in learning as put forward in the Part One. A conventional account of what Heidegger was teaching would believe that such a process of learning is exactly what Heidegger, especially from the '40s on, would characterise as the metaphysical danger of our current epoch. The second part of the thesis attempts to rethink this reading of Heidegger by examining the teachings given during the period when he is thought to be turning against such an anthropocentrism. This period of the 'turn' as it is known, contains, not coincidentally in the view of this thesis, some of Heidegger's most thematic accounts of the notion of learning. Thus the chapters of this part look at how Heidegger explicitly teaches the essence of learning in the *Nietzsche* lectures and courses, and the 1935 little-read course, *What is a Thing?* It is argued that these teachings indicate that learning is metaphysically anthropocentric, but in a non-economic, non-representative, and non-subjective way. It is suggested that Heidegger is teaching us to retrieve the project of learning from its humanist misrepresentation in the era of Technology. Where the latter is characteristically unlimited and activistically abstracting, the former is fundamentally finitudinal and for this reason, thingly.

The Conclusion, "Learning (from) 'Heidegger'" attempts to abstract from what has been learned about learning from (learning (with/in)) Heidegger's teachings and projects this learning into the contemporary context of the nature of things in our time. It gathers together the idea of learning's 'institutional essence' or '*praxical* anthropocentrism' under the term 'design'. The conclusion then sets out in a prescriptive manner how learning as a form of design is needed in the context of sustainability.

Endnotes for the Introduction

¹ I am alluding here to the Sameness of narrative and logic as revealed when thought in terms of learning. It is through the way both narrative and logic project themselves as having the coherence of a certain necessity that either becomes educational. When the narration of a personal experience insists that 'I have learned this' and that therefore 'it is necessary that you now learn to do the same or different', it aims to have the educational force of something logical. Conversely, logic dreams of having the individuated educatively identificatory ability of narrative, such that whoever 'sees' what is logical, learns to act accordingly of his or her own accord. It is the bane of logic that logic must be learned, that is to say, that one must learn, invariably in illogical ways, how to let oneself learn from logical reasoning, and that consequently most people are quite unreasonable, knowing what the logical conclusions prove yet failing to enact the 'necessary' consequences. This is not to claim that this Introduction demonstrates any rigorous logical reasoning (just as the Preface could hardly be called a 'moving' narrative). The point, which is one which this thesis cannot now take up, concerns rather the rhetoricity that is common to both narrative and logic by which either come to have an educational force: such work would need to look at those learners 'away from' Heidegger such as Hans Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Paul de Man and Hayden White amongst other narratologists. This thesis in a sense is taking up the projective pre-disposition that is required in order to hear rhetoric obediently.

² "Our epoch distinguishes itself from all others in having replaced the principle of constancy by that of change." U.Beck *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk* [Oxford: Polity, 1991]. For one amongst many in business management literature who continually make this claim, see Charles Handy's *The Age of Unreason* [Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1990]. Handy argues that the current nature of change is "discontinuous" as opposed to "incremental": "discontinuous change means completely rethinking the way in which we learn things." (9) Handy therefore advocates beginning from the recognition that "If changing is only another word for learning, then theories of learning will also be theories of changing. Those who are learning are those who can ride the waves of change and who see the world as full of opportunities rather than of damages. If you want to change, try learning one might say, or more precisely, if you want to be in control of your change, take learning more seriously." (56) Handy's views share much with this thesis. He firstly recognizes the sort of ontological learning that is embodied in things: central hearths design different types of families to those who live with ducted central heating (13). He secondly recognizes the proactive intentionality that is required for learning to occur: hence, he asserts that the "lubricants for the learning wheel" are "a proper selfishness", "a way of reframing", and "a negating [i.e., skeptical] capability" (64-68), the block to learning being a "'they' syndrome" or "humility" that allows "theft of purpose" (71-5).

³ Neil Postman's influential book, co-authored with Charles Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971], is a pertinent example. The book observes that conventional content-specific education is the first victim of the fact that "change changed" (23). The transmission of the tradition is now more than ever an anachronistic exercise resulting in what they call, with Toffler, 'future shock': "when you are confronted by the fact that the world you were educated to believe in doesn't exist" (26). In response the authors devise a form of generalized learning that transcends change based on Socratic inquiry that they call 'crap detecting': "Here is the point: once you have learned how to ask questions – relevant and appropriate and substantial questions – you have learned how to learn and no one can keep you from learning whatever you want or need to know." (34) For a significant demonstration of the Hegelianism underlying Postman's version of *Bildung*, see his more recent book, *Teaching as a Conservative Activity* [New York: Delacorte Press, 1979], which, suffice to say, is not a recantation of his earlier text, but merely a translation of its thesis to the age of digital media.

⁴ In many ways, learning has become not only one of the remaining things that humans believe that it is essential to do, but even one of the only things that we can now do. It is common to believe that there are now a number of systems that simply play themselves out – the market economy, technological development, political liberation, natural (whether materialistically genetic or metaphysically elevated consciousness, i.e., Gaian) evolution – and that humans, who are not driving these systems, merely must learn to adjust, to cope, to comply. In this situation, the frustrations of computer obsolescence for instance, caused by incessant upgrading, are not a problem requiring a responsive solution, but rather a situation to which we must merely learn to accommodate ourselves. This thesis is assertively refusing this submissive understanding of *our* world and the role of learning in it. We have taught ourselves these systems, but we are now unlearning how to teach them to do different things. Understandings of learning as a process of yielding, rather than as our most powerful interventionist force to wield against pseudo-independent systems, are what this project is seeking to destroy. This thesis is teaching that learning is, as it must be, more.

⁵ One of the current orthodoxies in learning theory could be referred to as learning pluralism. It denies that there is a single form of learning suitable for all learners. There is instead a number of styles of learning. See for instance the collection edited by R.Schmeck *Learning Strategies and Learning Styles* [New York: Plenum Press, 1988] notably published as part of the series "Perspectives on Individual Differences". The work on learning styles derives from a psychological typology of personalities with a more or less explicit phrenological determinism (e.g., 'left' and 'right' brain). The patent essentialising of subjectivity structuring this area of educationalist theory *should* lead to conceptual difficulties. On the one hand, the theory suggests that there are learning styles associated with personalities which educators *must* work with rather than against. On the other hand, theorists do recognise that learning can involve changing one's personality. Here is Schmeck's conclusion to

his 'Preface': "I note that teachers cannot of course, re-construct student's personalities, but they *can* try to build on personal strengths and avoid inadvertently preying upon personal weakness. In so doing, it may indeed be possible for a *series* of teachers (in effect the whole school experience) to alter personalities (and styles) of students in ways that broadly benefit the society that the school system serves." (xiii) In other words, the question learning style theory cannot answer is whether, and if so how, one type of learning style could be used to learn another style of learning? While the reductivism of the binary oppositions structuring most learning style theories (e.g., global-holist-synthetic-deep vs detailed-serialist-analytic-surface) is defended by its practitioners as heuristic, when used as guides for *teaching*, these heuristic distinctions cannot avoid instituting themselves as the student subject to such teaching (re)positions him or herself as the personality being projected *onto* him or her by the teacher if he or she is to learn. In the educationalist theory of constructivism which I will discuss below, the number of learning styles is multiplied to the point of complete individuation, i.e., where each learner is thought to have his or her own way of learning. In that case, there is nothing to teach about learning; one must merely facilitate the hope that the learner learns his or her 'proper' mode of learning.

However, the notion of 'learning strategies' is useful with respect to this thesis for at least recasting learning as an explicit project. The psychology foregrounds how essential motivation is to learning. If 'style' is understood with a more Heideggerian inflection, that is as an *existentiale*, an attuned disposition to beings as a whole, a way of standing as Heidegger says, standing with beings in an opening in order to withstand its reclosing, then the ineluctable instituting essentialism of the notion of 'style' is clarified. In this regard, see the way the term 'style' (but not learning) is used in the work of Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus in *Disclosing New Worlds* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997].

⁶ The persistence of disputes about falling literacy standards and IQs and the right dose of the 3 Rs that will cure these ills, should teach us at some point that we must be in a double bind, seeking *the* anti-essentialist essence. This thesis has been learning that the core of this compulsive disorder derives from the switch that has been installed between evolution and economics. It can be accessed quickly through the word competency: on the one hand competency refers to an ability to fit in, drawing on its etymological meaning, to seek with others; but on the other hand, it refers to the ability to compete, which means to seek in opposition to others. It is a continuing mystery to me that our world manages to tolerate this contradiction by valorising the thorough individuation of the latter – liberal individualism – whilst believing and even depending upon the totalitarian collectivism of the former – competition delivers social betterment to the nation: a holistic determinism that matches any fascism whether national socialist or communist. The mystery demands investigation of the way the compliant radicality or immanent transcendence of all competencies derives from the essence of learning. For a shortcut to the issue of competition, see Edward de Bono's *Sur/Petition: Going Beyond Competition* [London: Fontana, 1992], the by-line of

which is *Creating Value Monopolies when Everyone Else is Merely Competing*. Amongst other novel ideas, of course, de Bono's key proposal is that the best way to compete is precisely via strategic alliances with competitors, returning competition to the process of seeking with, at least selectively.

⁷ We have been taught by Heidegger that the essence of technique is the way it conceals its metaphysicality beneath an everyday materialism: in other words, its appearance as very non-metaphysically neutral testifies to the success of its non-neutral metaphysicality. It is most apparent in the postive-feedback relation between technology and technique, an unsteered cybernetics (Heidegger/Foucault might suggest that cybernetics only named itself the science of control because it had already lost control when it devised such a science) which has now consumed formal education, most work places and increasingly the way we live: for instance, to use the new technology in my house, I need to learn the technique, which both requires and encourages my use of other technologies, for which I need to learn... etc. Heidegger/Foucault would no doubt see PCs – which unfortunately neither lived to see – as instructive of a transition: the point at which we learn not only to dwell in this (de)learning cycle of technology and technique, but in so dwelling, become perpetuating extenders of the cycle, innovating through our techniquological competencies, new technologies and techniques – we are each learning to become part of the self-maintaining process that is software development (e.g., beta testing). For performative demonstration of this technological seduction see S.Turkle's *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* and then her *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995], or M.Heim's *Electric Language: A Philosophical Study of Word Processing* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987] and then his *Virtual Realism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998].

⁸ It is from Heidegger's teachings, as learned by Foucault's repressive hypothesis and Derrida's deconstructions, that we have learned how a weak concealed metaphysics is for that very reason all the more metaphysical. This thesis is seeking to demonstrate the converse: that a strong metaphysics is in fact less metaphysical. It is proposing that we will learn nothing about metaphysics until we very intentionally relearn and redesign metaphysical ways of learning.

⁹ In this respect, it is educational research's pretensions to be a science which, as always, prove to be the major obstacle to any fundamental questioning. The necessity for all research to be empirical, results in the dominance of the literature by case studies with deliberately restricted ambitions. The problem that educational research methodologies attempt to solve is how to learn when learning has happened, so that its effectivity and efficiency can be measured. The possibility and necessity of a technical, empirical solution to this problem is precisely what prevents more fundamental questions about learning: for clearly, one can only attest to the event of learning if one knows what learning is or at least how it manifests. However, pausing the activist demand for a moment reveals that thorough reflexivity is required even to deal with things like the 'Hawthorne effect' in educational research: that is, the way in which paying attention to something in order to

learn how to improve it will, of itself, tend to improve it, especially in the case of learning, for essential reasons. For instance, to measure learning, researchers test learners before and after an educational exercise, mostly not noting that the tests themselves would be instructive for the learners. This thesis will propose that the more positive obverse of the Hawthorne effect is the fact that learning is essentially always also learning to learn, or always also essentially (re)learning.

¹⁰ See D.Kolb's *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* [Englewood: Prentice-Hall, 1984]. Kolb works with a structuralist (in the Piagetian sense) model of learning styles. This work, for a long time definitive, has now been replaced by the notion of Situated Learning (see H.McLellan ed., *Situated Learning* [Englewood: Educational Technology Publications, 1996]) which, acknowledging the prefiguration required to make an experience a source of learning, has allowed interactions with computers to be the main source of experiential learning.

¹¹ The point being made here is similar to the one Derrida has taught us about the way aporias do nevertheless get resolved by metaphysical Gordian knot cutting. Thus the necessary non-saturability of contexts, which manifests as an infinite regress of differential signifiers, makes *direct* communication impossible but nevertheless does not halt communication which thus can only take place in the usually concealed faith that a transcendental signified makes communication possible (see for example *Limited Inc. abc* trans. S.Weber [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988]), what Derrida has elucidated, following de Man on Heidegger via Levinas, as the 'promise' of speech (see for example *Memoires: For Paul de Man* [Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1989]).

¹² I do not understand why the abyssal paradox that lies within this thoroughly pervasive belief is not more troubling. What sort of nature is it that creates – though this theologises Nature: the paradox is enhanced by asking, What sort of nature is it that develops from out of itself – the ability to denature, and denature not just the entity with the ability, but all other entities? How on earth can the ability to unlearn nature, to 'teach' other natures into existence, be natural? Either this transcendence does once and for all away with any notion of nature (which is meaningless without 'immanence' as part of its definition), or we at last accept that there is only anthropocentrism, that is to say, there is only what *we* learn to be there, for example, first and foremost, 'nature'. These overly-passionately phrased questions lie at the heart of the motivation for writing this thesis and return in the Conclusion.

¹³ Evolution, as adaptation, reacting to changes in the environment, has been and continues to be the primary explanation of what learning essentially is. Once again a fundamental contradiction is immediately below the surface, for evolution is only meaningful as a thoroughly deterministic materialism, something that undermines the very possibility of any cognitive psychology whilst opening up the contradiction that is 'machine learning' or the project of Artificial Intelligence. In this context, the high Kantianism of H.Maturana and F.Varela (which starts from the assumption

that there is only ever the anthropocentric observation of observations, never mere observing, and that one can consequently explain behaviour only by projecting the existence of autopoietic entities, which only appear to interact with the environment when they are in fact only ever interacting with themselves: the environment is strictly noumenal) is perhaps the best explanation of how learning might occur without anthropomorphically begging the question by assuming that an entity can 'cognize' what needs to be learned (the changing environment) before it is learned. See *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realisation of the Living* [Boston: D.Reidel, 1980].

¹⁴ Another major motivator for this thesis has been my amazement at the lack of philosophies that take up this axial way of defining human being. For instance, of the two from whom I would most expect it, where is learning (explicitly) in Arendt's *Human Condition* and *The Life of the Mind* and Heidegger's *Being and Time* and *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude?* Whilst animals learn, theirs is considered the bad or lower form of learning, i.e., unconscious *mimesis*, being passively moulded by an environment (the materialistic determinism of evolution mentioned above – though Heidegger grants animals more than this, that is, capacity: see FCM 228-9), whereas only humans have the conscious ability to surpass imitation by creating new models with which to actively remould themselves and the environment. This quantum leap is the result of learning language. By learning with language, humans can learn 'about' things, about learning for instance, that is to say, about how to learn in non-animalistic ways, learning how not to be animals. The next note points out however, that this hubristic result is always immediately and very artificially delimited, that is, mimetologised.

¹⁵ Acknowledging the anthropocentrism of learning is almost always tempered, again in a Kantian fashion, into a more reasonable humanism by assuming that only the truth can be truly learnt: see for example the work of L.Ferry. In other words, that the *zōon lōgon échon* can speak anything into existence is, from the start of the history of the West, always moderated by the translation that asserts that only the logical can actually be realised by us animals. The history of the West has certainly testified to the abysmal error of this equation: as Kant showed (*pace* Kant), the old belief that we are learning to progress or progressively learning to become more reasonable is perhaps little more than an over-optimistic sense of enthusiasm expressed by those not even taking part. See Lyotard's response to Kant that attempts to institute a different form of learning, based on a sigetic mournful remembrance of all those events in the twentieth century that attest to the failure of humans to learn to become progressively more humane: see *Heidegger and the 'jews'* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990] and the final section of *The Differend* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989].

¹⁶ One of the key aspects to this thesis involves granting that learning has the ability to move from a present activity into a past, a 'having-learned' that, in its alreadiness, acquires the alwaysness of what, if it wasn't also something that can still be actioned again in the future, could be called a

priori. This thesis centres on Heidegger because he teaches us the verbal nature of being (or what Thomas Sheehan has identified as the aspect of that verb: see his “*Das Gewesen*” (which Sheehan translates as ‘already’ rather than ‘is-as-having-been’) in B. Babich ed., *From Phenomenology to Thought* [Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995]), through which there is ontology, that is, essential limits and binds on what is and can be, but that that ontology can however and does change, even because of or at least in relation to the actions of human being. In other words, this thesis is drawing on the fact that to understand how Heidegger understands Being, without hypostasis, as *kinésic*, as historical, one must understand learning ontologically.

¹⁷ Throughout this thesis, the term ‘learning’ will be substituted for Being in various Heideggerian *Wahlspruch* or mantras; here the guidewords of *What is Called Thinking* (“what is most thought-provoking is that in these most thought-provoking times, no one is yet thinking”), and the famous exergue to *Being and Time* which takes up a quote from Plato’s *Sophist* are being used. The opening of the next paragraph takes up Heidegger’s more Aristotelian formulation of the question of the meaning of Being. This act of substitution is mostly heuristic in the direction of learning – what can be learned by replacing Being with learning in Heidegger’s texts. It follows Gregory Ulmer’s pedagogy which is to learn a philosophy by using it as a model for establishing another philosophy. However, there is also a larger thesis which underlies this dissertation which works the chiasmus in the other direction: Being, in all its Heideggerian modulations, is best understood as learning.

¹⁸ This phrase is a reference to the subtitle of Lester Milbrath’s *Envisioning a Sustainable Society: Learning Our Way Out* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989]. This thesis is an attempt to suggest that one of Heidegger’s most significant teachings concerns the fact that we cannot merely learn to change: the whole point of his historicity, his repeated insistence upon the need to learn (i.e., deconstruct to its destinality) the history of the things we take for granted, is that we can only learn to change by unlearning how we currently are (i.e., have to be): “Especially we moderns can learn only if we always unlearn at the same time... we can learn thinking only if we radically unlearn what thinking has been traditionally. To do that we must at the same time come to know it.” (WCT 8) This is precisely why learning for Heidegger is ontological: what we have learned to be has an ontologicality that cannot merely be escaped, but only overcome by a learning of equal ontological power.

¹⁹ Arendt’s concept of natality is one of the most profound contributions to the essential questioning of our learning condition. It captures what this thesis is asserting is the radically constructivist anthropocentrism of learning, the fact that the world can be created anew each time someone ontogenically learns, even though this opportunity is almost always lost when newcomers are taught about the world in traditional ways that make it seem unrenowable. This latter tendency, the fact that the promise of natality can in many ways never be fulfilled, also instructs this thesis in its attempt to demonstrate that the freedom of essential learning is never fully available to us, but

rather only ever exists in a self-limiting way. See “The Crisis in Education” in *Between Past and Present* [New York: Penguin, 1977].

²⁰ To this extent, this thesis is trying to make a contribution to the current wider reaction to the perceived relativism of postmodernism. For a range of such work, being done mostly via post-Husserlian and post-Heideggerian hermeneutical phenomenologies (e.g., Eugene Gendlin’s new responsive order, Christopher Norris’ critical realism, Don Ihde’s instrumental realism, Charles Spinosa and Hubert Dreyfus’ plural world anti-essentialism, but also the more sociological work of Bruno Latour’s hybrid realism, Pierre Bourdieu’s reflexive realism and Niklaus Luhmann’s system realism), see the papers for the conference *After Postmodernism* (1997) at ><http://www.focusing.org><. The absence of learning, in any explicitly fundamental sense, from such a project, is again surprising.

²¹ Derrida has demonstrated the extent to which the popularity of Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History* for instance, indicates that even amongst those arch-realists, the economic rationalists, there are many who still need to believe this about what is historically learnable: see Chapter 2, ‘Conjuring Marxism’ in *Spectres of Marx* [New York: Routledge, 1994]. It is also strange that those who have made a career out of polemicising against the whole wrong turn that 20th Century continental philosophy has taken, like Luc Ferry, can do so in the name of unshaken faith in a Kantian teleological history of rational progress. Ferry’s inability to learn the ahistoricity of his own notion of history and his consequent refusal to believe that anything has been or should be learned from the history of 20th Century philosophy, has been powerfully set out by Jean-Luc Nancy in “The Forgetting of Philosophy” in *The Gravity of Thought* trans. F.Raffoul & G.Recco [New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993].

²² For example, see the anthologies I.Harel & S.Papert eds, *Constructionism* [Norwood: Ablex, 1991], L.Steffe & J.Gales eds, *Constructivist Education* [Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1994], Y.Kafai & M.Resnick eds, *Constructionism in Practice* [Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996] Whilst constructivism is most highly developed as an educational theory, it has attained a much wider currency. Constructivism in this more common sense, often under the title of deconstruction (where this concept circulates *without* the texts of Derrida), is supposed to be the theory behind the characterisation ‘postmodern’. Remembering the educational theory aspects of constructivism is useful because it recasts the whole debate about the postmodern in terms of learning. Postmodernity in other words, becomes the realisation that what we have been taught about the world is not of the essence of the world, but merely what we have been taught, and what we must now unlearn. We either learn this as essentialities empirically stop working (the sociological postmodernism of Anthony Giddens and Zygmunt Bauman, otherwise known as detraditionalisation or the ambiguities of reflexive modernisation), or we explicitly teach it in order to ethically prevent essentialities from working (the philosophical postmodernism of Jean-Francois Lyotard, or the political postmodernism of deconstructive feminism for example).

²³ Concerning some of the first work on constructivism in mathematical education, see S.Papert's *Constructionism* [Cambridge: MIT Media Lab, 1986]. See also Papert's suggestion that the term 'mathetics' be given as the name for the art of learning to rival the way 'pedagogics' represents the art of teaching ("A Word for Learning" in *Constructionism in Practice*). Mathematics is fertile ground for examinations of learning for two reasons, one of which is shared with this thesis, and the other of which is not. Mathematics is, to the learner, thoroughly abstract in a way that demands moving into a different ontological domain. It therefore provides a supposedly uncontaminated (by, for example, socio-political issues) and dramatic instance of learning. Secondly however, mathematics, despite its abstraction comprises key axioms which can provide discrete, almost concrete learning objectives. It is therefore possible to ascertain when a child has successfully learned a mathematical concept. This thesis turns to Heidegger because he shares with mathematics the first point (though obviously there is much contamination to wade through) while refusing the second point. And this is the whole point of this thesis: what is learning when it can involve ontological shifts beyond identifiable targets?

²⁴ One of the original motivations for this thesis was an attempt to set out a context through which to learn what 'computer supported constructivist learning' can teach us about our epoch's defining attempt to converge technology and learning. Attempting to teach machines to learn is therefore no mere specialised part of either technology or education. I will suggest that this is why Heidegger characterised techno-science as mathematical: because the essence of technology concerns the essence of learning, cybernetics as the bio-technical determination of beings as a whole is the modern errant concealment of that co-essentiality, in other words, the withdrawal of learning beneath an unlearned learning essentialism (or activism). The task of Weiner, von Foerster and Pask, amongst others, for instance, is to find *the* algorithm or *the* distributed parallel hardware architecture for learning. If cybernetics is the science of control in animals and machines, "control is nothing other than the sending of messages which effectively change the behaviour of the recipient" (Weiner *The Human Use of Human Beings* [London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1950], 8); that is to say, cybernetics is the dream of pure teaching, and life as autopoietic is the dream of self-teaching, that is, pure learning – a *Grundstellung* of metaphysics if ever there was one. See the work of Alec McHoul on cybern-ethics ("Cybernetymology and -ethics" *Postmodern Culture* v9 n1 (1998)), though, in missing Heidegger's characterisation of Technology's mathematicality, McHoul misses the relation between learning and cybernetics and so risks, in his promotion of the ethics of reflexivity, replicating a certain unlearned learning essentialism (crudely, 'being aware makes all the difference'). Compare with Cary Wolfe's defense of the reflexivity of a cybernetic way of thinking from a more sociological perspective: *Critical Environments* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997].

²⁵ Piaget's structural approach to developmental psychology is generally felt to be the key originator of this version of constructivism, though the latter is well supported by most pragmatic

psychologies (e.g., James, Peirce) and philosophies (e.g., Dewey). All give a metaphysical significance to the physical *action* of learning: learning is something that one must do, individually. For instance, Piaget's position can perhaps be summarised by the dictum: "Each time we prematurely teach a child something he would have discovered for himself, the child is kept from inventing it and consequently understanding it completely."

²⁶ In mostly unacknowledged ways, progressive educationalist theory that opposes itself to mere knowledge-based or information-transfer institutional educating, has learned about learning as *praxically* manifesting understandings from the early Heidegger. This is the claim that to have learned means to have appropriated a relational disposition toward making meaningful actions within that region of learning. The emphasis thus always falls on competencies rather than abstract knowledge, though constructivists vary in the importance given to the *ability* to abstract for learning; that is to say, if the learned is relational, to what extent must one explicitly relate the learned to oneself? Does articulating the learned assist in constructing its relations to all else that one has learnt as the world? See the work of D.Perkins, for instance in the Harvard Project Zero publication, D.Perkins, J.Schwartz, M.West & M.Wiske eds *Software Goes to School: Teaching Understanding with New Technologies* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1995] and T.Duffy and D.Jonassen eds *Constructivism and the Technology of Instruction: A Conversation* [Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1992], who defines understanding in terms of relational, recallable and revisable explanations and examines the role of explicitly transferring such explanations to other settings as a way of developing understanding: i.e., the best way to learn is to teach.

²⁷ Social constructivism takes its lead mostly from Vygotsky's cultural psychology. There is however an interesting version of the story of the development of social constructivism in relation to educational technology. Firstly, until recently, schools could only afford a few computers, forcing several students to crowd around each monitor; and since the hardware on these computers was not state-of-the-art, the software interfaces were not yet visually mimetic, but quite symbolic. Anthropological observations of students learning (from) computers therefore noted much interaction between the students as they attempted to decipher the interface. Contrary to the accusations of anti-socialism, the pragmatics of computing in schools allowed theorists to suggest the way they in fact encouraged interpersonal collaborations. Secondly, when the project of trying to develop artificial intelligence hit the essential anthropocentrism of learning, it lowered its ambitions from the creation of independent intelligence, to enhancing the intelligence of the computer-user combination with specialised 'expert systems'. Again therefore a certain pragmatism (re)humanized the theory justifying the incorporation of computers into education. The combination of these two histories has resulted in 'Computer Supported Collaborative Work or Learning' now being the dominant educational technology theory; in other words, *social* constructivism is expediently the most prominent 'left' form of constructivism. See for instance, T.Koschmann ed., *CSCAL: Theory and*

Practice of an Emerging Paradigm [Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996] and Charles Crook *Computers and the Collaborative Experience of Learning* [London: Routledge, 1994]. See also the return of notions of apprenticeship in the work on 'Legitimate Peripheral Participation' (the name of work done by J.Lave and E.Wenger *Situated Learning* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991]) and the 'computer supported' work which draws on these theories, such as that which advocates the use networked computer databases that allow students to mimic professional associations by creating 'Knowledge Building Communities' or 'Rich Environments for Active Learning' (REALs, the name of work done by the Cognition and Technology Group Vanderbilt); for instance, KANE, a software package for 'Knowledge Acquisition in Non-linear Environments', in this case the topic being *Citizen Kane*.

²⁸ Ernst von Glasersfeld, initially a theorist of the practice of mathematics education, is the most committed defendant of radical constructivism in educational philosophy, though again there is much support from pragmatist psychologists and philosophers: see *Radical Constructivism* [London: Falmer, 1995].

²⁹ The work done by M.Scarmadalia and C.Bereiter on 'authentic learning' (see for example, "Intentional Learning as a goal of Instruction" in L.Resnick ed., *Knowing, Learning and Instruction* [Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991] whilst not declaring any philosophical references, does nonetheless make explicit the extent to which constructivist education depends upon willing. Thus their theory refers to 'Computer Supported *Intentional Learning*' where students only learn via articulated projections or INTUs ('I Need To Understand...'), what this thesis calling 'willed necessities': see "Computer Support for Knowledge Building Communities" in CSCL.

³⁰ To put this more polemically, nothing can be learned by accusing those who attempt to overcome metaphysics of remaining metaphysical. If it is possible to criticise Derrida for instance for being metaphysical when he deconstructs Heidegger's attempts to overcome metaphysics, it is because he is attempting to learn and teach us something by that critique, whereas those who make this criticism can teach us nothing (new). An understanding of the essence of learning leads one to learn the absolute unavoidability of metaphysical essentialism for learning. All that is available to us is to learn from, but also with, is metaphysical essentialism. For an example of the confusion that can be caused by not learning from metaphysical critiques of metaphysics, see Christopher Bewes' *Postmodern Cynicism*. For a more cogent negotiation of this problematic, see Vincent Descombes' *The Philosophy of Modern Events*.

³¹ I refer to the fact that perhaps one of the best examples of logocentrism, of the metaphysics of presence that Derrida is taken to have deconstructed, is teaching in its relation to (self-)learning: teaching aims to be that technique that manages to transcend its materiality and achieve a pure transmission, a transference without interference, an immediate agogical effect modelled on the self-affection of autodidacticism. There is for instance a reciprocal envy between doing and telling in

regard to teaching: if I employ language, I suspect that the purely ‘hands on’ demonstrative process of something like an apprenticeship would avoid the erring that teaching suffers with speech (or more accurately, writing); if I make use of demonstration, I imagine that the strenuousness of my dumb show could be avoided with the effortlessness of full speech. In either case I feel constrained by the physicality of my medium and yearn for a presence without presentness. Whilst deconstructions powerfully teach us the remnants and noise upon which every proposed form of a transparent-conduit teaching depend, it should be noted that telepathy does occur, or come close to occurring, when, as Pierre Bourdieu has taught us, there is an environmental confluence between the teacher and learner; that is, when the apparatus of symbolic violence makes learning possible by reproducing itself – or more precisely reinforcing itself, since the learner must already share the teacher’s *habitus* to begin to learn – in and around the learner. See P.Bourdieu & J.C.Passeron *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* [London; Sage, 1977].

³² The polemic is targeted at liberal education and the current hegemony of curricula-as-consumer-choice. (On this point, see the work of Chet Bowers, discussed in the Conclusion, especially *Elements of Post-Liberal Theory of Education* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986]). In other words, whilst there is the continued belief in the necessity of education, as evidenced by compulsory schooling and the expansion of tertiary education take-up, what is learnt, the content of the education, is mostly seen as contingent. There is no clear sense of what the content of a ‘basic’ education must be: knowledges and skills are valued only in the weak sense of facilitating a minimal social functionalism. Educational content, corrected of any claims to essentiality, is therefore nearly totally open to individual selection. It is this thesis’ thesis however, following Heidegger’s philosophising as a whole, that until what is to-be-learned is seen as essential, it will not be learned authentically, that is, ontologically.

This is not to say that despite all the learning that the world thinks is going on, learning is mostly not happening. Quite the opposite: if learning is happening, it is happening I would suggest because such metaphysical necessities are everywhere at work even if denied in the learning process. Despite *laissez-faire* educational pluralism, if students are learning, it is because they *are* making use of necessities, even if extracted from the artificial constraints of universal education and its disciplinary system, or from pragmatic needs and desires now converted into necessities – it is necessary to learn to get a job to survive.

³³ As Heidegger indicates in the opening sections of the 1925 *History of the Concept of Time* (trans. T.Kisiel [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985]) course, Husserl misses both the nature of the intending (the factual ex-istentiality of the being that intends, i.e., Dasein) and the nature of the intended (beyond categorial intuition is the for-having of the beingness of what is) – see J.Taminiaux’s “From One Idea of Phenomenology to the Other” in *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991] and T.Kisiel “On the Way

to *Being & Time*; Introduction to the Translation of Heidegger's *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*" in *Research in Phenomenology* v15 (1985). Hubert Dreyfus is perhaps the most sustained reader of Heidegger as someone who is trying to reveal a non-representational intentionality: see *Being-in-the-world* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991]. But see also C.Christensen's criticism's who argues that "Heidegger is thus not out to *eliminate* 'representations', not even from a mere *portion* of the self's intentional activity. Rather he seeks to understand what it is to be a representation and in particular what it is to be something with representations." ("Getting Heidegger Off the West Coast" *Inquiry* v41 (1998), 85: see also "Heidegger's Representationalism" in *Review of Metaphysics* v51 (1997)) In terms of this thesis, Christensen is arguing that Heidegger is relearning (ie deconstructively reappropriating) the *praxis* at work within every *poietic techné*.

³⁴ This expression is Taminiuax's in "From One Phenomenology to the Other: The Double Reading of Hegel" in *Heidegger and the Project*; see also the essays on the Heidegger-Hegel relation in his *Dialectic and Difference: Modern Thought and the Sense of Human Limits* [Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1985]. For others who have ventured to differentiate this Sameness, insofar as both Hegel and Heidegger seek to found a new history by relearning history as a necessitous project, see Bernasconi's *The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of Being* [Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1985], and Krell's "Descensional Reflection and the Hermeneutics of History" in *Intimations of Mortality* and Lacoue-Labarthe's "Obliteration" in *The Subject of Philosophy* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993], the last two pointing to the importance of Nietzsche, he being that which happened to the history of philosophy after Hegel had presumably ended it.

³⁵ This generalization is absolutely false: most of our populations actually believe the opposite, recognizing that too much has been too learnt, preventing it from being unlearned, and therefore preventing most things from ever changing. On this, see Natasha Levinson's "Teaching in the Midst of Belatedness: The Paradox of Natality in Hannah Arendt's Educational Thought" in *Educational Theory*, v47 n4 (Fall 1997), but also all those who have criticised the optimism of someone like Richard Rorty whose liberationist pragmatism clearly rests upon an uncritical acceptance of capitalism's institutional inequalities: for instance, to keep to context of this thesis, see again Cary Wolfe's *Critical Environments*. However, it is still true that the generalization occurs even though it is false. In fact, it is exactly the prevalence of the generalization that causes the despondency of those who recognize its falsity, marginalising their claims that not everything is possible, or that everything is possible only for a few, *for those with access to education* for instance.

³⁶ For this sense of passivity I am drawing on the interrelated work of Levinas (see amongst others his essay "Substitution" in *Basic Philosophical Writings* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996]) and Blanchot (see *The Writing of Disaster* [Lincoln: Nebraska Uni Press, 1996]). The term in their usages attempts to indicate a past that is so past, so always already, that in its immemoriality, it exteriorises the subject who is exposed to its an-archic-ness.

³⁷ This understanding of the process of learning is modeled on Derrida's work (which in turn draws on Schmitt) on the decision, which has demonstrated in numerous places that this most voluntaristic of activities must by necessity for its very possibility, that is to say, in order to account for its most extreme version, contain within its essence an utter madness or abyss that undoes the continuity of the subjectum who undergoes the decision. See "The Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority" in *Cardozo Law Review* v11 n5-6 (1990), "This Mad 'Truth': The Just Name of Friendship" in *The Politics of Friendship* [London: Verso, 1997] and the interview "Dialanguages" in *Points...Interviews 1974-1994* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995].

³⁸ David Farrel Krell has called John Llewellyn (for instance his *The Middle Voice of Ecological Conscience* [London: Macmillan, 1992]) and Charles Scott (for instance his *The Question of Ethics* [Bloomington: Indiana Uni Press, 1994]) "The Save Our Already Extinct Middle-Voice Society": see his "A Thought in Full Self-Dispossession" in *Research in Phenomenology* v25 1995. I would add Eric White's *Kaironomia: On the Will-to-Invent* [Ithaca: Cornell Uni Press, 1987] and following his lead, hope that this thesis is adding to that conservational society the notion of the *Will-to-Learn*.

³⁹ To this extent, this thesis parallels Lyotard's attempt to retrieve (story) telling or saying from the economic exchange of predetermined 'said's which exclude *differends*: see the *The Differend*. Just as Lyotard to this end seeks to elucidate "Levinas' Logic" (in G.Bennington ed., *Lyotard Reader* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 199X]), i.e., "Do before you understand", so this thesis is seeking to elucidate the nature of the projecting that sets up the possibility for learning.

⁴⁰ This thesis is perhaps more indebted to the Jena romantics who learned from and tried to (re)teach the Kantian schema. The essential work in this respect, which has informed the whole of this thesis, is P.Lacoue-Labarthe & J-L.Nancy's *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988]. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy draw on seminal work by Blanchot (see for instance "The Athaeneum" now in *Infinite Conversation* [Minnesota: University of Minneapolis Press, 1996]) and Benjamin (see for instance "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism" now in M.Jennings ed., *Selected Writings Volume 1: 1913-26* [Cambridge: Belknap, 1996]). Several other works on the Jena romantics are also indebted to this work: see for example M.Helfer *The Retreat of Representation: The Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996] and A.Seyhan *Representation and its Discontents* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992]. The key text that should have been analysed by this thesis is obviously Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967].

⁴¹ Concerning Hegel's appropriation of *Bildung*, see John Smith's *The Spirit and the Letter* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988].

⁴² Concerning Nietzsche's relation to the hypothesis of this thesis, see D.Cooper *Authenticity and Learning: Nietzsche's Educational Philosophy* [London: Routledge, 1983] and Leslie Thiele's *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study in Heroic Individualism* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990]. I cite this book not only for its relevant chapter "The Educator and the Solitary", but also because I will mention Thiele's later work on Heidegger and environmental politics in the Conclusion. I have also learned much from Randall Havas' *Nietzsche's Genealogy: Nihilism and the Will to Knowledge* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995]. Havas, drawing on Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche (see his "Who is Heidegger's Nietzsche? (On the Very Idea of the Present Age)" in H.Dreyfus & H.Hall eds *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* [Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992]) but also on Cavell's reading of skepticism, argues in a way that is similar to the turn around this thesis is trying to perform in relation to Heidegger, that Nietzsche is "meant to strengthen not to weaken, our commitment to truthfulness." (xvii)

⁴³ This is what can be learned from Arendt's Kantianism, which sources its notions of authority and freedom (without violence or sovereignty) from the Kant of the Third Critique. In other words, Kant's politics, like Heidegger's are educational: see *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982].

⁴⁴ It should be noted that Kant's "What is the Enlightenment?", in an argument similar to his design for the university, proposes that philosophy has the (critical) force of that which is without (institutional) force. This paradox is resolved by saying that philosophy has the power of learning. See Foucault's *Politics and Truth* [New York: Semiotext(e), 1997] and P.Kamuf "Going Public: The University in Deconstruction" in S.Haverkamp ed., *Deconstruction is/in America* [XX]. See also Geoffrey Harpham's work on the Enlightenment in *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* [Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992].

⁴⁵ With Dewey, it would exactly be a matter of identifying the romanticism at work in his pragmatic instrumentalism: similarly with Rorty. To this extent, it would be the Heideggerian aspects of Dewey (*contra* Rorty) that are pertinent to this thesis. For someone who attempts to bring together Dewey, Rorty, Gadamer and Habermas in what this thesis would see as a *praxical* finitudinal anthropocentrism (though it is more a social constructivism than a radical constructivism), in other words, someone who, without ever mentioning it (and particularly not its essentialist aspects), is discussing nothing but the institutional essence of learning, see the work of Bernstein: for example *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971], *Beyond Objectivity and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Science* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983].

⁴⁶ See for example M.Gadotti, a student of Freire, *Pedagogy of Praxis: A Dialectical Philosophy of Education* [Albany: State University of New York, Press, 1996] and the prolific work of H.Giroux: for example, *Theory and Resistance in Education: a Pedagogy for Opposition* [London: Heinemann, 1983],

Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning [Granby: Bergin & Garvey, 1988], and co-authored with S.Aronowitz *Postmodern Education: Politics, Culture and Social Criticism* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991]. Exactly what is missing in the sense of praxis informing this work is ontology, that is, any sense of the way the learned can become *essentially* existent.

⁴⁷ This caricature of hermeneutics does not do justice to someone like Gadamer, whose extensive understanding of *Bildung* (see amongst others, *Truth in Method*) and his experience of Heidegger's teaching (see *Heidegger's Ways* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994]) allows him to see the necessity of an initial asymmetrical and disjunctural leap or projection by which the hermeneutic dialectic begins. See Sean Gallagher's *Hermeneutics and Education* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992].

⁴⁸ This is what the theory behind self-directed learning is always seeking, in ways that we will see are exactly parallel to Heidegger's concerns about fundamental ontology: a) how to get motivated? b) how to ensure that the self-direction starts down the right track? Issues of motivation are of course central to all educational psychologies (especially the work on 'learning styles') which attained its Technological zenith with the behaviouralist conditioning of B.Skinner, something educational research is still struggling to overcome. The individualistic yet collaborative nature of the various constructivisms is part of that continued reaction.

⁴⁹ The key here is Hannah Arendt's work on authority and freedom without sovereignty. Beginning with the distinction between authority and authoritarianism, the latter being the use of force necessitated by the withdrawal of authority, Arendt's famous essay documents what this thesis summarises as the fact that the one with authority, the Other, is the one from which one is able to learn: see "What is Authority" and "What is Freedom" in *Between Past and Present*.