

**Original citation:**

Ellis, Randolph. (2015) Moving from idle talk to transformative conversation : practising Christian formation within a group. *Rural Theology*, 13 (1). pp. 31-41.

**Permanent WRAP URL:**

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**Publisher's statement:**

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Rural Theology Studies* on 28 May 2015, available online:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1179/1470499415Z.00000000039>

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Moving from Idle Talk to Transformative Conversation: Practising Christian Formation  
within a Group

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### **Abstract**

This study employs a philosophical mode of interpretation in examining an approach to personal formation within a group setting. It argues that notions of finitude, mortality, death, inauthentic discourse and resoluteness are crucial in turning group members toward understanding the roots of their being. Immersion within this process is deemed formative and transformative in itself, especially when awareness of inauthentic modes of engagement is raised and practised. The purpose of this study is to encourage mindfulness of neglected issues ('who' it is being called, who it is being formed, for example) and demonstrates, through an exemplar, how turning toward these may bring about personal change within a group setting.

*Keywords:* hermeneutic education, adult formation, finitude, authentic discourse

### **Introduction**

When issues of life and death come to the fore in any human life, who we are and who we are to become appear in a particular kind of focus. In a sense, our mortal roots, our radical finitude, become exposed. Often there is a turning away from this stark exposure. Its starkness becomes covered over by various kinds of consolation and assurance. Sometimes, there is a flight into notions of immortality where the entirely personal nature of our own death is put to one side. Accompanying this flight is a particular kind of discourse. Drawing on the work of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), this paper explores Heideggerian notions of human finitude in relation to formational possibilities within a specific group. This group is the actual group that the author has facilitated over a number of years. About a dozen people come together each week for two hours on a Thursday afternoon, approximately thirty-six times a year. They gather at 2 p.m. in the Chapter Room of Bangor Cathedral in North Wales. Although the group has a strong core membership it is by no means a closed group, with members free to leave and then return (often in a cyclic fashion).

Bangor is a large scattered rural diocese and members of this group travel many miles to attend. In one way or another, all of them are 'exploring faith' and whoever they are, be they Priest, Licensed Reader, ordinand, layperson or simply those who want to ask difficult questions, they find within this group conditions congenial to adventurous discourse. In a sense, this group exemplifies how this mode of formation might be employed within other contexts.

No matter what is being discussed, wakefulness is cultivated of how group discourse may collapse into the recycling dynamic of 'idle talk'. This average everyday kind of discourse is taken to characterise how an apparently authoritative, easily accessible and plausible mode of conferring covers up the roots of our human existence. The challenge for

this group is to turn repeatedly towards these roots so that the centrality of ‘who’ we are (and therefore who we are called to become) is constantly brought to the fore.

### **Not-being-at-home**

*Focus* is the Latin word meaning hearth or fireplace, a site where the whole household may come together and be warmed. *Focus*, the hearth, the fireplace is a paradigm of domestic gathering and familial memories, of being at home, of being bound by some sort of commonality. Imagine though, not being at home yet yearning to return, of professing you are already there (when you are not). Imagine never leaving, of always being at home or believing you have never left (when you have never been there at all). Imagine a home where no one has ever lived, and a *focus* where no fires are ever lit.

It is very difficult to remain at home, with all its familiar and consoling rituals, while practising turning towards ‘finitude ... our most proper and deepest limitation’, to sit in a group where the invitation is audaciously to accept that ‘anxiety is there. It is only sleeping. Its breath quivers perpetually ... Only slightly in those who are jittery, imperceptibly in the “Oh-yes” and the “Oh no” of the men of affairs; but most readily in the reserved, and most assuredly in those who are basically daring’ (Heidegger, 1993, p. 106). To sit in such a group where death, our inescapable and ‘deepest limitation’ is turned towards as ‘this strange and alien thing [that] ... banishes us once and for all from everything in which we are at home’ (Heidegger, 1953, p. 158). To sit there and practise being mortal.

Mortality and the consequences of human finitude are foregrounded in some way or another for those in this group, not as ideas that can be argued out of existence nor as simple features that are deemed common to all, but as something that has to be turned towards repeatedly. This foregrounding is intended to expose the various ways that mortality and human finitude get covered over by certain types of discourse, mutually agreed presuppositions and persistent cultural habits. It is we ourselves who are immersed in this.

‘Heidegger uses the term “Dasein” for the fundamental fact of being-right-there that characterises human existence’ (Bolt, 2011, p. 174).

Dasein must depart from its familiar customary limits and transgress the limits of the familiar in order to exist authentically. Dasein’s authentic selfhood and the originality and power of its creations depend on a heroic transgression of the customary and conventional and on the resolute acceptance of extreme consequences. (Capobianco, 2010, p. 133)

### **The determinate conditions**

The terms ‘customary’, ‘familiar’, ‘authentic’, ‘conventional’, ‘resolute’ and ‘transgression’, together with ‘finitude’ and ‘mortality’, are key notions in the unfolding of this position. ‘Da-sein’ indicates that it is we ourselves who are ‘being there’ or ‘being here’ in such a way that our existence as being in the world is exposed in a particular way:

As a factual being, Da-sein did not ask to be born, but it was born all the same. It did not ask to be born male or female, but it was born male or female all the same. Da-sein did not ask to be born in this place or at that time, but it was born in this place or at that time all the same. It did not ask to be born into these circumstances or those circumstances, but it was born into a determinate set of conditions all the same.

(Letteri, 2009, p. 14)

These determinate set of conditions reveal that we, as Da-sein, are thrown into existence as beings who are radically mortal ‘through and through’ and whose claim to having substantial and secure foundations is revealed as null. In being thrown into existence, ‘human life is not some subject that has to perform some trick in order to enter the world’ (Heidegger, 1992, p. 7E), but is here already as we ourselves:

[In] an elemental sense ... from birth, each one of us is flung willy-nilly, to quote A. E. Houseman, into, ‘A world I never made’ which, long before we come to reflective

thought, bathes us in history and establishes those pre-understandings that we carry with us into the hermeneutic circle. (Gardner, 2010, p. 52)

As being ourselves, as ‘thrown into the world’, we are always being with others and in order to be with them in a public and readily accessible way, who we are and who we may become undergoes a persistent modification. When I meet with others and speak with them and they speak to me, they are never simply animated flesh or simply other versions of ‘things’ that I encounter in the world. The others are like myself and, being like myself, have an enormous influence upon me and upon whom I may become. In the ordinary course of events, I allow myself to be influenced to a greater extent by the others’ influence upon me (and I contribute likewise to that others’ conformation by my influence also) and I find this very easy and very satisfying:

We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the ‘great mass’ as *they* shrink back; we find ‘shocking’ what *they* find shocking. (Heidegger, 1995, p. 164)

### **Being communally average**

As thrown into a particular place, a particular time, a particular language and born to a particular woman in a particular group, we, as Dasein ‘[find] its own interpretations conditioned by and permanently indebted to the anonymous social normativity governing intelligibility at large, a normativity that Heidegger calls *das Man*’ (Carmen, 2000, p. 20). It is this normativity that signifies being at home around the fireplace under the usual circumstances. By authentically turning towards its own finitude, its own mortality and death, Dasein faces extreme anxiety at its own ‘impossibility’. This ‘impossibility’ has no content. There is nothing within it that Dasein can cling to, nothing that could give it a sense of being ‘at home’, nothing with which it can become familiar:

For no skilfulness, no acts of violence, and no artfulness can stave off death. Death is not some state of affairs like others that can be circumvented. Nor is it something that 'comes to' human beings from without; rather, the being of humans in itself proceeds towards its death. Human beings, however, mostly know of this essential trait of themselves only in the manner of evading it and thereby conceding their exclusion from entry into their own essence. (Heidegger, 1996, pp. 75-76)

The very manner in which *das Man* maintains its inconspicuousness and unascertainability arises by Dasein's speaking, acting, understanding and interpreting itself out of this *communal averageness*, with the result that Dasein is actually pushed to the foreground through its citation of *das Man's* authority. While Dasein is being pushed to the fore in this manner, *das Man* recedes into the background, and by this recession *das Man* gains its true potency and influence:

The 'they' concerns itself with transforming this anxiety into fear in the face of an oncoming event. In addition, the anxiety which has been made ambiguous as fear, is passed off as a weakness with which no self-assured Dasein may have any acquaintance. What is 'fitting' according to the unuttered decree of the 'they', is indifferent tranquillity as to the 'fact' that one dies. (Heidegger, 1995, p. 298)

### **The group hermeneutic task**

Up to now reference has been made to a group, and to sitting in a group and to being in a group, one which has been invited to 'depart from its familiar customary limits and transgress the limits of the familiar in order to exist authentically'. Although this group is the actual one which the author of this paper has facilitated on a weekly basis over a number of years, it could be any such group in which a facilitator:

has a profound responsibility of creating a learning relationship with students and encouraging them to build such relationships with others. One of the most

characteristic features of this relationship is the openness to risk, misunderstanding, and the unexpected, which situates the relationship in the horizon between familiarity and strangeness. (Wiercinski, 2011, pp. 109-110)

And it is there in that horizon between familiarity and strangeness that this group or any such group, situates itself, a situation in which ‘the dialectic of familiarity and strangeness describes the way we live our lives and expresses our belonging to the world through experiences of affirmation and comfort as well as disorientation and alienation ... [in which]... negativity and estrangement are not experiences to be eliminated’ (Wiercinski, 2011, pp. 109-110). Rather, ‘the hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naïve simulation of the two but in consciously bringing it out’ (Gadamer, 1989, p. 305).

The practice, therefore, is to avoid a naïve simulation of familiarity and strangeness in which one can be assimilated to the other or subsumed by the other or otherwise cancelled out. Overwhelmingly, this form of ‘hermeneutic education addresses the tension between epistemology and ontology’ (Wiercinski, 2011, p. 110) and maintains this tension without either slackening one in favour of the other or, more specifically, by not presenting ‘finitude’ or ‘mortality’ or ‘death’ simply as subjects to be discussed (and therefore potentially to be argued out of existence or rendered harmless). ‘By encountering the strange and unfamiliar, the familiar is changed. The transformation of what is to be understood is the event of understanding’ (Wiercinski, 2011, p. 110).

### **The cultivation of indifference**

Earlier on it was said that ‘what is “fitting” according to the unuttered decree of the “they”, is indifferent tranquillity as to the “fact” that one dies’ (Heidegger, 1989, p. 87). The cultivation of this indifference, this indifferent tranquillity, has the possibility of arising and being fostered if the group lapses into the common discourse of the ‘they’ in which the

strangeness and unfamiliarity of death becomes rendered as familiar and as an event. What gets covered over in this tranquillised discourse (and therefore not available to be turned towards) is that it is always *my* death, *my* becoming impossible, *my* utter extinguishment, *my* completion, *my* no longer being open to my own possibilities that is being talked about; and *not* some verifiable affair occurring 'out there' (and mostly to other people) (Heidegger, 1995, p. 297).

For discourse to cover up, to interpret in a deficient way, one does not need an explicit intention of deception ... It is enough for something to be said with groundless excess and repetition in order to transform the essential sense of the discourse ... into a covering up ... Idle talk covers up more than it uncovers. It covers up especially by retarding uncovering, by way of its inherent presumption of already having uncovered. (Heidegger, 1985, p. 273)

Therefore, idle talk disguises the 'mineness' of death that it is *my* death, and it does this by covering over:

the fact that death is ungraspable, that it marks the end of the subject's virility and heroism. The now is the fact that I am master, master of the possible. Death is never now. When death is here, I am no longer here, not just because I am nothingness, but because I am unable to grasp. (Levinas, 1987, p. 72)

As this way of being (and its accompanying discourse of idle talk) is not only always ever-present, it also forms the very means by which ordinary everyday life is rendered intelligible and meaningful, by managing to slide into the background by the *prevalence* of its existence. Human-being fails to notice this prevalence, and in its very striving to become more genuinely itself may become absorbed more comprehensively within its language, concepts, ways of being, culture, tradition and philosophy. At each point within this absorption, human-being may claim that each novel step marks a radical personal

transformation (on the basis that it ‘has never been here before’). Yet if this step does not involve an engagement with itself as it is (that is, as radically finite), then no authentic movement has been made.

### **Distinctive characteristics of ‘idle talk’**

Earlier on it was said that ‘idle talk covers up more than it uncovers. It covers up especially by retarding uncovering, by way of its *inherent presumption* of already having uncovered.’ In other words, it becomes its own authoritative basis by inherently presuming that such and such is the case.

So what therefore are the characteristics of this discourse? It is one that has its own distinctive hermeneutic in that it cycles and recycles, not in the sense of refreshing its interpretive basis, but in *dissipating* itself within a generality that resembles ‘gossiping and passing the word along’ (Heidegger, 1995, p. 212). It would be virtually impossible to trace this ‘idle talk’ back to an authoritative and original source as there is no singularity in its origin. It is what it is essentially, ‘a passing the word along’, in an accumulative manner by many. Although its groundlessness is hidden, it itself is not. ‘Idle talk’ is a discourse that does not take accountability for its own authoritative basis. By its very nature it always turns away, always evades being held to justify the basis of its assertions; it is a discourse that is always ‘out there’ in the public realm of the world.

The groundlessness of idle talk is no obstacle to its becoming public; instead it encourages this. Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one’s own. If this were done, idle talk would founder; and it already guards against such a danger. Idle talk is something which anyone can rake up; it not only releases one from the task of genuinely understanding, but develops an undifferentiated kind of intelligibility, for which nothing is closed off any longer. (Heidegger, 1995, p. 213)

Earlier on it was said that this way of being (and its accompanying discourse of idle talk) forms the very means by which ordinary everyday life is rendered intelligible and meaningful. It has to be readily accessible, something that anyone can engage in, something that one can be in agreement with without contention and something which has to remain average in an everyday sort of way. In this manner:

The 'they' seeks to put our mind at rest by first shifting the focus from mortality to the event of death, then passing death off as a common occurrence that comes to us all one day. By expressing ourselves in proverbs and generalities, using plural or indefinite pronouns ('we', 'us', 'one') we do not allow ourselves to engage with the 'mineness' of death: there is a world of difference between saying 'death comes to us all' and 'I shall die'. (Barnett, 2009, p. 14)

### **The hermeneutic turn to strangeness**

Earlier on it was suggested that the hermeneutic task consists in not covering up the tension between familiarity and strangeness by attempting a naïve simulation of the two, but in consciously bringing this tension out. Within this 'consciously bringing it out' there is a constant hermeneutic return to the strangeness of our essential groundlessness, a return in order to take hold of who we are in our radical finitude so that we can articulate in one way or another 'I must die'. We ourselves are 'the they', for we are always and unavoidably being with others even when we are completely alone. Anything we do or say is from this existential position as the ordinary position of human existence. When we attempt to step out of this ordinary position, that is to step out from familiarity into strangeness, we are modifying who we are within our ordinariness. In other words, it is always a modification of who we are within 'the they'. Any group is already a gathering of 'the they', and it can always maintain itself in its basic ordinariness by embracing and remaining with the familiar in an everyday sort of way. But:

authenticity is a relationship of struggle and conflict with death and finitude, while inauthenticity covers over mortality and the possibility of anxiety. Inauthenticity offers some psychological comfort at an epistemic price: it covers over the truth of our groundlessness and mortality in a life of forgetful existence. Resolutely facing death is the condition of authenticity. (Carel, 2006, p. 111)

In no way is authenticity, on this analysis, considered ‘a normative assessment of reality’ (Cohn, 2002, p. 88) in which inauthenticity is an inconvenient and foreign intruder which radically distorts some kind of grounded basal line. Both authenticity and inauthenticity belong to Dasein’s existential nature in which one has the capacity to modify the other. Authenticity and inauthenticity are *who* the human being is. It is always me myself and you yourself who is being authentic or inauthentic and never *what* I am. When I say to myself ‘I must die’, I am admitting that:

mortals are human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies. The animal perishes ... We now called mortals mortals – not because their earthly life comes to an end, but because they are capable of death as death. (Heidegger, 1975, pp. 178-179)

### **My own finitude and mortality**

Earlier on it was said: ‘Drawing on existential arguments of finitude and mortality, this paper will explore the possibilities of formation within a group context and the conditions under which this might flourish’; such is the ‘strap-line’ of this enterprise. Turning towards my own finitude and mortality, and maintaining openness to risk, to misunderstanding and the unexpected within the horizon between familiarity and strangeness:

is neither a matter of running ahead towards one’s death, or actualising it (for, as pure possibility, it can never be actualised); nor is it a matter of thinking about death, of ‘brooding over it’ or of developing a morbid relation to one’s life in the expectancy of

one's demise. It has little to do, then, with a death drive, or with the demand to die the right death ... It is quite the opposite: the holding in view of one's mortality amounts to an increase in one's life potential, in one's ability to open oneself to life, or to one's being as potentiality. To envisage oneself as mortal, to see oneself as this being whose being is essentially finite is to learn not to die, but to live; it amounts to an intensification of life ... Joy is not to be mistaken for the contentment which too often we identify with happiness; rather, it is the feeling linked to the increase and the 'acting out' of our ontological power. (De Beistegui, 2005, p. 47)

Formation as transformation remains always a possibility for human-being in that its 'manner of being in the world ... is for the sake of its own self' (Heidegger, 1988, p. 170). This means that it is not an object alongside other objects in the world which do not have the capacity to encounter, but is always an entity that cares for itself. Human-being has 'selfhood' and therefore *is* for itself in a concerned way of being; therefore it 'can choose itself on purpose and determine its existence primarily and chiefly starting from that choice; that is, it can exist authentically' (Heidegger, 1988, p. 170). Nevertheless, as has been already rehearsed, human-being's capacity to choose itself on purpose can be dissipated into a vague averageness thereby: 'It can also let itself be determined in its being by others and thus exist inauthentically by existing primarily in forgetfulness of its own self' (Heidegger, 1988, p. 170).

### **The group: Formational possibilities**

Earlier on it was said that it is very difficult to remain at home, with all its familiar and consoling rituals, while practising turning towards 'finitude ... our most proper and deepest limitation' (Heidegger, 1993, p. 106). But that is what this group does, it gathers in a circle so that each member can see the other, and it does this on a weekly basis for two hours. Over the five or so years that the author has facilitated this group, it has developed purposes

that have turned it away from settling into a conventional community of enquiry. It has embraced formational possibilities through the practice of ‘not being at home’, of not settling into the domesticity of regarding any line of enquiry as a straightforward epistemological principle. In a sense, the seemingly epistemological has become the ordinary mode of turning towards finitude as ‘our most proper and deepest limitation’. In the last sentence above, it might have been more tempting to replace the phrase ‘*our* most proper ...’ with ‘*the* most proper ...’, so that its generality could be evoked in preference to the way it turns back onto ‘me’ and ‘our’. But this turning back as a practice serves to locate finitude as *de-stabilising* of foundational assurances.

But why should this group engage in such purposes and such practices? Most of its members are exploring Christian vocation or have been accepted for ordination or are generally ‘exploring faith’. They have emerged out of a background of assurances which somehow has bypassed the primary question of ‘who’ we are in our human radical finitude. In a sense, they have received the assurances of faith without examining ‘who’ it is being assured, and have understood this bypassing as an embedded feature of their being and of their becoming faithful. This bypassing has led to a sense of personal immortality ineradicably connected to being faithful; of somehow being immortal (into which notions of mortality and finitude have been subsequently fitted) where to disturb this process is an unsettling of the bases of faithfulness.

The desire to establish an unequivocally secure basis for personal existence (by fleeing into notions of personal immortality linked to being faithful) attaches itself to discourse characteristic of *das Man*, but one of the key notions at play within the formational opportunities of this group is the coming to realisation of ‘not being at home’. In turning away from being at home, members of the group become increasingly engaged in rejecting general notions of consolation and the sort of discourse that accompanies it. The primary

purposes therefore, become *formative* as being *irruptive* against the averageness of easily accessible intelligibility, and *evasive* of discourses characteristic of simply ‘passing the word along’ (Heidegger, 1995, p. 212).

### **Lingering in Good Friday**

There is nothing substantial enough in human-being to prevent it from losing *all* its flesh. Right into the heart of who it is (and all it is) from the beginning (and at any time) is penetrated the possibility of utter fleshless extinguishment. Like snow on a branch, its flesh melts and drips to oblivion under the rising sun. Good Friday as the exemplary day of mortal finitude, of end-flesh, of abandoned mastery, becomes an embarrassingly positioned obstacle to be vaulted over (without touching), in preference to the perceived resolutions of Easter Day. But *this* group lingers in Good Friday (and its twenty-four hours is certainly not long enough to explore all the possibilities *that* day offers); yet in lingering, the group attempts to avoid the ‘deceitful way of not wanting to see itself in its essentially anxious and unsettled existence’ (Capobianco, 2010, p. 54). It practises what Heidegger names *die Unheimlichkeit* ‘not-at-home(ness)’ (Capobianco, 2010, p. 53).

One of the functions of the facilitator is to turn the group repeatedly towards unsettledness, ‘not-at-home(ness)’, to let members of the group experience a foil to conventional and familiar experience in which an ‘openness to risk, misunderstanding, and the unexpected, ... situates the relationship in the horizon between familiarity and strangeness’ (Wiercinski, 2011, pp. 109-110).

Within this Thursday group, the facilitator has always attempted to foster a situation where its members could become unsettled and, in a sense, cut loose from their foundational assurances so that these latter could no longer become obstacles to uncovering who they are (and who they are called to be within their faith-world). This can be a difficult and hazardous task and must be done within a setting that ‘holds’ them so that they feel open to whatever

needs to come on. There are fixed occurrences of group ritual when members have to experience their autonomy (in whatever way that expresses itself); certainly when they are reflecting without interruption, giving a self-report without interruption, and when not replying to those who cut across them seeking clarification or assurance. These are the fixed occurrences of group ritual. Members are allowed to become 'voiced' in such a way that they become responsible for their own utterances. This responsibility is not in any sense directed to the *finality* of what is said *per se* but has an open endedness that allows for complexity.

### **Becoming complexity-tolerant**

Gradually, members of the group stop being 'closed off' by assurances (assurances which have had the effect of reducing complexity to a faith-compliant simplicity). In other words, they become increasingly complexity-tolerant, where ambiguities, paradoxes, apparent illogicalities and unresolved open-endedness become the ordinary and everyday stuff of group-discourse. This takes time and personal courage. It certainly involves the overcoming of anger and frustration when the attrition of multiplicity bears down upon them. This attrition is a process of world-opening. It refuses to become stabilised into a steady single viewpoint. The easily begotten riposte eventually comes to have a typically hollow tone, one registering that more exploration needs to be done. In all this, the faltering voice, as it genuinely attempts to articulate whatever is just then being formed, becomes the customary mode of utterance. The fluidly eloquent fluency of assurance is replaced by an investigative and inspiring spirit that sometimes seems surprised at its own burgeoning audacity. Silences, hesitations, backtracking, sudden insights and re-appraising become progressively more characteristic of this group's dynamics.

### **Life and death: Familiarity and strangeness.**

This group is a hermeneutical one, immersed within a hermeneutical process. The title of this paper, *Moving from idle talk to transformative conversation: Practising Christian*

*formation within a group*, points towards a hermeneutical spiralling between familiarity and strangeness. It requires at many points an abandonment of mastery and a recognition of powerlessness. Often it points towards an apparent chaos in which the option of remaining within established assurances is always available; but ‘chaos is life to be (possibility). Because there is no essential difference between bodily life and the surrounding chaos, because there is nothing sacred to the will and nowhere to hide from life’s appropriations, chaos exists as orderable in essence, as the always already to-be-ordered’ (Mitchell, 2002, p. 322).

So what, therefore, is this group’s explicit purpose in its being immersed within this hermeneutical process? Essentially it engages with a particular kind of praxis, one that recognises that:

praxis is the practice of setting limits to life. But the limit that praxis sets is always only to be transgressed – it must be, for life is nothing more than this transgression. Life is born of such overstepping and first begins from the limits. Heidegger expresses this in a thought recurrent throughout his work, that a limit is not an ending but a beginning: ‘The liveliness of a living being does not cease at this limiting scope but continually takes its start from it.’ Life begins at the limit. (Mitchell, 2002, p. 322)

This liminality, this destiny to be limited by radical finitude, is not a curtailment of something that could be otherwise. In such directions lie the seductions of immortality. Immortality signifying the ‘otherwise’, the drift towards a fictional, fantastical and comprehensive mastery (a mastery not open to foundationless human being). Instead, this ‘hermeneutic education’ embraces the scope that recognises within its practice that:

pain and suffering, the experience of loss and deprivation, alienation and estrangement accompany us in the search for self-understanding. What we learn on that journey is that we are not independent and disengaged individuals. Educational

virtues encourage us to face life in its integrity and to understand it as an existential project rather than focus on the desire for control and mastery alone ... As we participate in the hermeneutic conversation, we can say that we participate in the event of education. Our lived understanding discloses the essential characteristics of human life in its temporality and finitude and thus reshapes our self-understanding by revealing the mystery of life in its entirety. (Wiercinski, 2011, pp. 120-121)

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