"Learning between Discovery and Invention:" Saving Learning from "Learnification"

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> You have learnt something. That always feels at first as if you had lost something.
> –Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara*, Act III (1907, p. 132)

> …genuine learning is therefore an extremely peculiar taking, a taking where one who takes only takes what one basically already has. –Martin Heidegger (1982, p. 275)

"Learnification," as educationalist Gert Biesta explains, refers to the continuing ascendency of a "language of learning," of phrases and terms like "learning processes," "learning designs," "learning sciences" and "lifelong learning." Such a vocabulary suggests a common concern with a continuous, natural process that can be identified, specified, isolated, facilitated and further enabled using tested methods and techniques. This approach represents a discursive shift away from a more common, traditional vocabulary of education, from terms like students (now called "learners"), teachers ("learning facilitators"), and classrooms ("learning environments"). Speaking and thinking of education in terms of "learning," Biesta argues, alienates us from the most significant questions of our field: "The problem with the language of learning and with the wider 'learnification' of educational discourse is that it makes it far more difficult, if not impossible, to ask the crucial educational questions about content, purpose and relationships" (2006, p. 36). "The point of education," Biesta continues, "is never that children or students learn, but that they learn *something,* that they learn this for particular *purposes***,** and that learn this from *someone*" (2006, p. 38; emphasis added).

In this article, I simultaneously counter and augment Biesta's claims by introducing a rather different "discourse of learning," one which has as its principle focus the *lived experience of learning*. Although it does not address the importance of what is learned, who teaches it and why it is learned, it *does* offer insights into learning and study that are notably different from the dominant discourse of learning. In this context, learning appears not as an ongoing process that is to be facilitated, but an experience of difficulty and uncertainty that can neither be ameliorated nor optimized. It is an experience that, as one scholar puts it, is situated at the threshold between "no longer" and "not yet" (Meyer-Drawe 2012, p. 15). It emerges, as G.H. Mead has said, when one "world of unquestioned validity… has lost that validity and there is nothing left but the subjectivity out of which a new world may arise" (1900, p. 12). It is "not a path from shadows to the light," but rather occurs in a fractured and indeterminate "twilight landscape" (Meyer-Drawe 2012, p. 15). In this paper, I reconstruct aspects of this interpretive, experiential account of learning, particularly as it has developed through the work of German phenomenologists in education—beginning with the work of Günther Buck (1925-1983), continuing with Käte Meyer-Drawe (1949-

), and including the philosopher Bernhard Waldenfels (1934-). I conclude with an overview and evaluation of a very recent contribution to this discourse by Evi Agostini, *Learning between Discovery and Invention: Towards Creative Genesis in the Culmination of Experience* (in German: *Lernen im Spannungsfeld von Finden und Erfinden: Zur schöpferischen Genese von Sinn im Vollzug der Erfahrung*, 2016).

Speaking experientially, learning does not find its fulfilment in theory but in being *lived*. Consequently, I begin with what might be considered a small slice of "life." This comes from the brief but fascinatingly ambivalent quote from Bernard Shaw's antiwar play, *Major Barbara,* above—a passage also quoted by Günther Buck in his landmark *Lernen und Erfahrung* (*Learning and Experience*). Barbara is a young, idealistic pacifist working in the Salvation Army (hence "Major"); but the quote above actually comes from her newly-discovered, long-estranged father. Barbara is horrified to discover that he is a munitions manufacturing magnate, but he is both proud and patient in dealing with his new-found daughter. He has just assured her that her charity work has a lasting impact and that the good she has done cannot be simply undone by her new affiliation with him. "You have given me back my happiness," she says in reply, "I feel it deep down now, though my spirit is troubled" (1907, p. 32). It is in reply to this remark that her father speaks of learning and loss, and Barbara responds by seeking to learn (and presumably lose) more—by asking to visit one of his munitions factories.

But why would having just learned something mean *both* happiness *and* loss? Is this indicative of learning in general? Isn't it about *gaining* something than *losing* it? To answer these questions first requires a foray into the basics of phenomenology as a philosophy of experience, and as a method, as Edmund Husserl and Bernard Waldenfels see it, for the study of consciousness.

Learning at the threshold between "no longer" and "not yet"

Phenomenology regards learning-as-experience, like any other experience, as being structured by *intentionality*. Intentionality refers to the fact that in being conscious or aware, we are first always conscious of *something*. In our everyday existence, in what has been called our "everyday concernful coping," we are aware of things in terms of their purpose and function. We recognize a door *as something* to pass through, to open or close; we recognize a keyboard *as something* for typing, a screen as something for display. In short, we perceive "something as something." It is with this "as something" that the world gains its significance for us. This "as something" marks what is called the "signicative difference," which is the locus of all phenomenological concern, as Bernard Waldenfels explains:

> that something shows itself *as something,* that something is meant, given, understood, or treated in a certain way… The formula *something as something* means that something (actual, possible, or impossible) is linked to something else (a sense, a meaning) and is at the same time separated from it. (2011, p. 21)[1]

[1] The signicative difference, however, is not as simple as the opposition between something that is "actual" and something "subjective" that might be superimposed upon it. Among other things, it is a recognition that experience and subjectivity exist only in relation to objects, to the world outside. Subjectivity cannot be entirely arbitrary, entirely "subjective" because in the signicative difference, something, as Waldenfels says, is always *linked* to that which it is taken to be.

However, when we are aware of or engaging with "something as something" in this way—which is basically all the time—we are never immune to interruptions, disappointments and surprises. When we get used to seeing "something as something," for example, the thin upright surface on our desk as a screen, it can sometimes suddenly appear to us as something rather different: It can flicker and go blank, revealing itself as something quite different from what we expect—not as images to be seen or words to be read, but merely as an inert, perhaps blemished or dusty black surface.

As the founder of phenomenology, Husserl explains:

> Expectations [are] …essentially susceptible to disappointment in all circumstances. Perception brings something new; that is its nature. To be sure, it may have a prefiguring that stems from the past of consciousness, something new arrives in accordance with something already familiar, something already constituted as past for me. (2012, p. 263)

In being shaped by intentionality, in other words, our experience is also shaped by expectations based on past experience. However, by its very nature, our experience of things always involves something that is new or different—something that departs from previous experience and from expectation. Speaking of experience in terms of "perception," Husserl emphasizes that this experience is not so much our own to possess and control, rather that it is something that belongs to the world: "But it is certainly clear that it is perception that first decides, and that something new can be a slap in the face to all expectation." Such experience of the world, however, need not be as painful or extreme as a slap in the face. It can be as minor and subtle, Husserl continues, as a "prefigured sequences of sensations like melodies" which may either confirm or depart from expectation. In this case, an experience or response may be more like the subtlest and most fleeting expression of familiar pleasure or disappointing dissonance.

Husserl is saying that such departures from expectation—whether they result in shock or pain, or merely a raised eyebrow—are an ongoing part of experience. Waldenfels describes this non-conformity of expectation and experience using the word *Widerfahrnis*, which has been translated as "counter-happening" (English 2013, p. 119), and which I've described elsewhere as a kind of "experience against the grain" or "experience despite oneself" (Friesen, 2014, p. 72). In presenting a resistance to the flow of experience, some interruptions or discontinuities, can move us from un-self-aware "pre-reflective" experience to experience that is explicitly reflective. These are moments in which we become aware of what we are experiencing *as such*, and further, aware of ourselves and our world. It is at this point that experience can be said to turn into *learning*. Writing in her book *Learning as Discontinuity,* Andrea English explains that interruption or discontinuity "allows us—and often forces us—to experience our own limitations." Characterizing this "learning-as-experience" as "transformative," she continues that for such learning to occur, a simultaneously inward and outward "turn" must take place:

> The *inward turn* happens when one begins to reflectively think about the prereflective interruption in one's experience and thereby to make it into a conscious moment to be examined. The *outward turn* refers to the changed outlook on the world that arises out of coming to understand oneself—one's wishes, one's capabilities, one's questions, one's needs, one's feelings, and one's difficulties—and the world differently or otherwise than before the learning experience. (2013, p. 125)

Because it involves a change, a transformation (however subtle) in self and world, learning is different from the ongoing pleasures and annoyances of experience in general. At the same time, though, it is not the same thing as what is sometimes called "transformational learning," a "life-changing" transformation in perspective that is triggered by a life crisis or major life transition (e.g., Mezirow 2011). Learning as I am describing it here certainly doesn't *exclude* such rare life-changing moments, but its overall focus is in on events that are much less traumatic or unusual. At the same time, learning and experience in the sense I am using here is also "not a process of sedimentation, in which layers of experience and knowledge are built up, but rather it is a *restructuring* of previous experience that changes how we relate to the other and to the world" (Schratz & Westfall-Greiter 2015, p. 5). Günther Buck, who was the first to characterize learning in these ways, describes it in terms of the reflexivity of experience itself: "Only in experience, thus turning back on itself, which at the same time is a change in our capacity to experience, lies the actual educative power of experience" (Buck 1989, p. 3). When our experience "turns back on itself" we can be said to experience a "break with" ourselves. As English puts it, one can be described as developing "a sort of awareness of *oneself as other* that is indispensable for transformative change and learning" (2014, p. 93; italics in original). Gunther Buck uses a special term, *Umlernen*, which can be translated as "re-learning" or "un-learning," or as Andrea English puts it, "transformative learning." Buck himself explains the term as follows:

> *Umlernen* [...] is not simply the correction of this or that idea that one had about something; it also means an alteration of one's "disposition," that is, of one's entire horizon of experience. He who learns as "*umlernen*" is confronted with himself; he becomes conscious of himself. It is not only that certain ideas change, rather, the learner himself changes. On account of this essential negativity, the process of learning is the history of the learner himself. (Buck, 1969, p. 47; quoted and translated by A. English 2014, p. 96)

"Essential negativity," as Buck uses it here, refers not to that which is "bad" or "undesirable," but rather what changes, what is heterogeneous and uncertain—as opposed to that which is certain and in *this* sense, "positive." To change in this way is to change who one is; to learn is consequently to become who one is.

Despite the fact that most of this phenomenological work on learning has taken place in the last 20 years or so, Schratz and Westfall-Greiter emphasize its deep roots:

> This approach is not new; instead it represents a revisitation [of something gone before]. It can be found in Herbart's *Foundations of Pedagogy* (1806), in Nohls "pedagogical relation" (1924; see Friesen 2017), and in Muth's work on "pedagogical tact" (1962). In North America, it is above all developed and discussed by Dewey (1918) and van Manen (1991). (2015, p. 3)

Dewey, for example, characterized the kind of negative experience associated with learning as "moment[s] of 'confusion,' 'uncertainty' and perplexity,'" and saw such moments not only as the beginning of learning, but also as the beginning of "a moment when we begin to learn that we *can* learn" (English, 2014 pp. 93, 95).

In all of these senses, learning-as-experience could not be more different from learning as understood in scientific "learning theories" today. In these theoretical contexts "learning" is defined "as an enduring change either in behavior or in the capacity to behave in a given fashion."

Three theories of learning dominate: Behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism, which see learning (respectively) as a process of behavioural conditioning, as the processing of data or as the construction of new knowledge. In all cases, learning is regarded as a phenomenon that can be studied experimentally, regulated, designed, motivated, reinforced and otherwise manipulated. Indeed, entire university departments and multi-million dollar government programs have been founded on the confidence and certainty projected in these positivistic conceptions of learning. The unquestioned dominance of these approaches motivates critiques of "discourses of learning" by Biesta and also by Meyer-Drawe.

However, the careful study of "learning as experience" brings to the fore a rather different image of learning. It appears not as something to be specified, regulated and optimized, but as something that is of necessity highly contingent, evasive, fortuitous and ultimately imperceptible. Given that experience of learning begins when an expectation is *broken*, rather than when one is *fulfilled*, it is clearly different from a kind of flow or process that can be known explicitly, activated and then manipulated at will. When it is studied as an experience, learning appears to be much more closely associated with openness and passivity than with explicit action and progression--as a kind of patient waiting to let learning "befall one," rather than a moving process to be perpetuated or accelerated. As an experience of this kind, and as a difficult and self-reflective moment in time, learning cannot be predictably caused, planned, or controlled; nor can it even be reliably initiated. And when it *may* be actually happening, it can neither be reliably identified nor brought to an end.

In this sense, learning-as-experience, learning as lived and described, can be said to expose the Achilles heel of all learning "theory:" Namely, that we have almost no quantifiable, empirical access to it, and that the only thing of this kind we can grasp—however tentatively—are its supposed results.[2] Even when learning is studied with advanced MRI technologies, the moment of learning and the precise mechanisms of its occurrence remain unclear. We must feel satisfied with images and descriptions of how different parts of the brain "light up" when certain basic, identifiable tasks are undertaken—but this is the epiphenomenal appearance of activity, not of learning itself. And the best teacher, of course, can neither cause nor guarantee the learning of his or her students. Instead, teachers have an important role to play in responding to discontinuities in students' experiences, and to work supportively to ensure they do not withdraw as a result of them (Schratz & Westfall-Greiter 2015). And despite the disposition of openness that learning presupposes of students, even they can say that they learned something only after the fact. Indeed, the notoriously evasive nature of learning remains an open secret among "learning scientists" and other researchers and theorists claiming to have learning as their central focus. And it is fortunate for administrators, politicians and many others that the one thing that they *can* claim to measure and compare in standardized ways are *results*. And this is regardless of the why, when and how of the learning that they claim to be of such importance.

Learning between Discovery and Invention

The moment of learning itself, as suggested above, is situated at the threshold between "no longer" and "not yet," it occurs when the old is abandoned and the new does not yet exist: The "no longer" of ruptured expectations is clear, but the experience of having actually learned something new is

[2] Meyer-Drawe helpfully develops this point: "Learning itself comes predominantly into view in the form of results, as in long-term neuronal connections from a neuroscientific perspective or in the building of memory within the framework of cognition theory and its assumptions. The process itself withdraws from our attention both life-worldly and scientifically" (Meyer-Drawe, 2010, p. 9).

not. In this sense, learning indeed marks a moment of "loss," as the quote from Shaw above suggests.

It is based on this understanding of learning-as-experience—as learning not so much being *experienced*, but being fulfilled *as* experience—that Evi Agostini's account of invention and creativity is developed. Indeed, much of her study is devoted to the articulation and descriptive illustration of the experiential qualities and dynamics of learning and discovery briefly outlined above.

As Agostini makes clear, her work owes a great deal to what is referred to as the "Innsbruck Vignette Research Group," led in part by Michael Schratz (who is quoted, with Westfall-Greiter, above) and directly informed through the recent work of Käte Meyer-Drawe. This group has been working over the past decade to both develop and deeply engage with a form of phenomenological research that was initially inspired by van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology and its descriptive "anecdotes," but that has come to take on a rather different form. Unlike van Manen and many other North American phenomenologists, this group is careful to distance itself from the influence of Martin Heidegger (and also of his student, H.-G. Gadamer), and it understands its approach as following specifically in the footsteps of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's "phenomenology of embodiment." This is not only a reflection of German reticence to embrace Heidegger, who mixed his thought with racist and fascist ideology. It also reflects a desire to acknowledge the body as an inalienable part of experience—a reality largely neglected by Heidegger—and to avoid the temptation to reduce Heidegger's philosophy to a kind of functionalist account of human engagement in the world (e.g., Dreyfus, 1991).

Speaking specifically of van Manen, Schratz and Westfall-Greiter explain that their Innsbruck vignette research group does *not* rely on first person descriptions typically derived from interviews in van Manen's method. Instead, the method used by the Innsbruck Vignette group produces descriptions in the 3rd person, gathering data in ways that may be mistaken for participant-observer techniques, but whose epistemological modality is actually quite different. They refer to this method as "participative co-experiencing:"

> The vignette methodology enables researchers to capture *their* experience of *others'* experience as it occurs in the field, where researchers take a stance we refer to as "co-experiencing." This stance is similar to but not the same as participant observation. Rather, experience in this context is understood as something that one undergoes, and in the throes of experience it is impossible to simultaneously be in it and outside of it, to be participant and observer. (Schratz & Westfall-Greiter 2015, p. 8; emphasis added)

Agostini in particular describes her position as a researcher in terms of a "being-enmeshed" in the circumstances of the learning student or child, experiencing the shared temporal and sensory dynamics of a place where learning-as-experience can be said to occur. At the same time she warns that being co-present with the child does not mean directly sharing his or her lifeworld:

> Only in this fundamental pathically-attuned receptivity for the world of things and of the other can [the researcher] experience being spoken to—so that in the common presence of the lifeworld of the child a world of experience can emerge that is [simultaneously] *separate and shared* (*geteilt*). (2016, p. 49)

Just as neurological and other scientific methods cannot pinpoint the reality of the event of learning, neither can any phenomenological researcher claim to at once undergo and carefully observe his or her own experience of learning. According to Meyer-Drawe, as well as Agostini and her Innsbruck colleagues, a first person account of the experience of learning is not possible. One cannot observe or note one's own effortful experiences of learning, as if they were happening at arm's length. One cannot access, master and control learning as if it were something that is *not* integrally part of onesself. To further address these limitations, Agostini explains that in her research,

> the individual genesis of a vignette is documented, then communicatively validated with the subjects in the field and through a workshop method within the research team. As required, the data collected from the school experience is triangulated with other methodological approaches such as photo evaluation, document analysis, focus groups and interviews. (2016, p. 49)

The result of this is multiple descriptions that are that is in effect collectively authored (most of Agostini's descriptions are attributed to a "Brixen Authors' Collective"), and that can be rich and at times, distinctly evocative. The following excerpt is an example. It describes an elementary-level class reviewing a few last facts before a test. Hands fly in the air repeatedly after the teacher asks one question after another.

> …Evi is also among those who are eagerly raising their arms, and by fervently moving her hand, tries to have a turn at answering—but it is all in vain. She [eventually] takes her grey hoodie and puts the jacket on backward, so that the zipper is on her back. No one notices her, and she uses the hood to cover her face. No reaction. She takes the jacket off, turns it around and puts it on correctly. Still no one notices. (2016, p. 279)

Agostini understands this description in terms of the everyday creativity of self-expression. Evi, like some of the other children that Agostini describes, is seen as engaging in broadly creative acts to make herself "visible" to others. This type of invention or improvisation is further interpreted in terms that are "anthropological"—in the sense of the science or study (logos) of humankind (*Anthropos*). Although this area of philosophy is not widely recognized in Anglo-America, the insights it can provide are of great value to descriptive interpretation. They are used to excellent effect by Agostini in interpreting Evi's momentary concealment of her face as an improvisational interruption of the reciprocity of face-to-face situations. She quotes the philosopher Hans Lipps:

> The face has double meaning [in these and other experiences. It means to] see in the world, and to become visible in the same direction one is looking. When one looks into or onto the world, one becomes a self[, recognizable as oneself to others]. Wearing a mask lends one anonymity and at the same time suspends the wearer from himself. (Lipps, as quoted in Agostini, p. 280)

In playing with her jacket as described above, Evi can thus be seen not only as creatively experimenting with her visibility in relation to the teacher, but also as suspending her participative presence in the classroom. Recognizing these possible "human" dimensions of visibility and invisibility underscores the radicality, perhaps even the desperation of Evi's creative gambit for

attention, and casts a broader light on the dynamics of attention and recognition unfolding in the classroom and in (creative) interaction more broadly.

An appreciable part of Agostini's book is devoted to a "human-anthropological" study of creativity and creation in the West—forming a kind of critical genealogy, a productive excursion into the changing nature of human meanings and experiences over time that is uncommon in descriptive phenomenology in English. It can be easy to forget that experience has a history; any one kind of experience or identification of its "essence" is historically contingent (if not also situationally and culturally contingent, too). Perhaps this is nowhere clearer than in the case of creativity, which in traditional societies is placed firmly in the hand of gods or of a God, with human beings regarded as unchanging products of divine inspiration or creation. As the anonymity of medieval cathedral architects and sculptors attests, experiences associated with the word "creativity" (especially in its more monumental senses) were regarded quite differently from the way they are understood today. There is no Frank Lloyd Wright or Frank Gehry of the medieval era. Naturally, since the Renaissance—as familiarity of names like Brunelleschi or Michelangelo attest—creative achievement has been increasingly associated with individuals and their social identity and status. Today it is common to see every individual not only as inherently creative, but as self-creating—being able to change our own given nature (e.g., our lifestyle, our sexual identity and biology) more-or-less at will. There is thus no timeless experience or "essence" of creativity, even when confined to the West. Instead, we have a history of its emergence and variation.

Creativity-as-Experience

To delve more deeply into Agostini's text, it is necessary to understand the relationship of creativity to learning, and to return briefly to the phenomenological account of "learning-as-experience" outlined above. Like learning itself, creativity arises at experiential thresholds or interruptions—junctures and disjunctions that are a part of the ongoing reality of counter-experience or *Widerfahrnis*. These are moments that form thresholds that at once separate and unite expectation and experience, knowledge and uncertainty, self and other. In exploring the creative dimension of these moments, Agostini provides a range of metaphors, examples and frames of reference, including an account of the temporality of creativity, as well as its corporeality and spatiality. She also presents a rich discussion of the creativity inherent in the giving and receiving of gifts. However, perhaps the clearest and most commonplace illustration of creativity in this sense is to be found in everyday conversation. Consider, for example, being asked a simple question—for example, being asked "What time is it?" This might not only disrupt one's immediate expectation in walking down the street; it certainly also makes a claim upon us (not only for an answer, but simply for our attention to another, to a question). What comes into play at this moment is something that Waldenfels calls "responsivity." Waldenfels' notion of response and responsivity ultimately applies to any moment of *Widerfahrnis*, and brings with it a particular dynamic. But it is perhaps most clearly illustrated through the example of a dialogical interrogative:

> Asking a question is an interlocutory event, a remarkable kind of event. It is an event that does not come to rest in itself but aims for the answer as another event, without itself bringing that event about. A question, apart from certain special cases, allows for more than one answer. And even where the answer is reduced to yes or no, the possibility still remains of evading or refusing to give an answer. (Waldenfels 1996, pp. 16-17)

And any particular answer, Waldenfels points out, never completely answers the question. Even in answering a simple question about the time offers many contingencies and possibilities that may or may not necessarily be addressed dialogically, but remain nonetheless. If asked for the time at a bus stop, concerns about accuracy and bus arrivals and departures would be in the air, if not made explicit; and if asked later at night outside a bar, the possibilities might be more convivial. At a minimum, the person asking might express thanks for receiving the time (which could then even be followed by "you're welcome"). Whether in an online chat, a phone call, or saying goodbye at the train station or airport, contact and conversation is compelled towards a kind of self-perpetuation which always opens up multiple possibilities for further question and answer, assertion and response. Conversation, in other words, is a process rich with the unexpected, unanticipated and unpredicted—an experience of *Widerfahrnis* in which the unexpected may "disappoint," but (hopefully) more often stimulates and provokes.

At the same time, a conversation also constitutes itself through momentary stoppages or gaps—through what Waldenfels refers to as a "hiatus:"

> the hiatus between claim and response is also a condition for our being able to speak at all of a "between" of interlocution, interaction, intermediary world, and intermediary realm, whenever something happens between speakers and actors that can neither be mastered by the individual alone, nor controlled by a higher authority, nor integrated into a whole. (1996, p. 19)

Being asked a question, even as simple as a request for the time, thus opens up a seemingly infinite range of possibilities, over which neither asker nor answerer has mastery. Significantly, this multiplicity, the absence of certainty and the resistance to closure all give the answer a specifically *creative* quality. Ultimately, as ethnomethodology and conversation analyses also show us, no conversation is every entirely scripted, but instead is improvised in a kind of co-creation of social reality. As Waldenfels observes,

> We should note… that in answering, it is not a pre-existing meaning that is reproduced, relayed or brought to completion. Instead, meaning itself arises only in answering. As a result, we are confronted with the paradox that a *creative answer is one in which we give that which we do not have*. ()

In answering, as Agostini puts it, we become "creative answerers." In other words, even when we are asked if we "have the time," we actually neither have *it* nor the full answer to the question in advance, as if we were waiting to use one of a limited collection of pre-set answers in a prescribed conversational repertoire. In more involved conversations, as Merleau-Ponty has observed, "my own words take me by surprise and teach me what to think." We confront the unexpected not only in the "hiatus" of the conversation, but also within *ourselves*. Following Waldenfels, Agostini sees this moment or spark of creativity as expressed not only in conversation, in relation to others, but also in relation to things in the world. If in conversation we are spurred by the unexpected to express and extemporize, our response to the unexpected in other forms can be seen as similarly responsive, creative or inspired. In this way, we can all be said to be creative, both in engagement with others and in the world more broadly.

However, this encouraging insight presents a challenge for Agostini: If creativity can be found in even the most offhanded reply or unexpected inconsequentiality, how is it possible to differentiate this everyday inventiveness from the kind of human creativity that would be educationally meaningful and valuable? In short, if creativity is everywhere, then when it is of special value? This has practical consequences that can be expressed through still further questions: How might a teacher recognize moments of creativity that stand out from others? When is creativity perhaps a euphemism for problematic behavior? (Think of Evi's response to being ignored above: Would it be equally "creative" if this response consisted of yelling or kicking another student?) When is creative behavior to be encouraged and when not? And if or when creativity *is* to be encouraged, exactly *how* is it to occur? If similar questions were to be asked about *learning*-as-experience, a criterion, as made clear above, would be available: Learning can be differentiated from the unexpected in everyday experience because it is one in which experience "turns back on itself," through a change in awareness of onesself and of one's world. However, Agostini does not offer such a criterion for creativity in her book.

Conclusion: Whose Learning is It Anyway?

Regardless of the challenges presented by creativity, or for that matter by the elusive nature of learning itself, the insights into the experience and the lived nature of learning offered by Agostini (and developed in the work of Meyer-Drawe, Waldenfels and others) offer rich possibilities for descriptive-phenomenological, theoretical and philosophical work and reflection. It is worth revisiting the two brief quotes provided at the beginning of this paper to briefly consider just one of these possibilities. As discussed, the first quote from Shaw depicts learning as kind of loss—as a loss of previous certainty, understanding or taken-for-grantedness. But Heidegger's cryptic observation provided just beneath it—and cited also by Agostini in her book—seems to suggest just the opposite: "…genuine learning is therefore an extremely peculiar taking, a taking where one who takes only takes what one basically already has."

In learning-as-experience, we certainly lose something we *thought* we had. But there is more to it than this: We also gain something that comes from *within* us, but that we *didn't know* we had. In responding or answering, as mentioned above, we sometimes surprise others or even ourselves by our own words: In this sense, we can be said to receive something and also give something that we were previously not aware of, prior to our experience of interruption and loss. We "come up with something." Another way to put this is to say that after we are interrupted, after experiencing a loss of a kind, we follow in response by a form of *giving*. Learning, and by implication, teaching as well, are fully implicated in this "give and take," as Heidegger also explains:

> Teaching is a giving, an offering; but what is offered in teaching is not the learnable, for the student is merely instructed to take for himself what he already has. If the student only takes over something that is offered he does not learn. He comes to learn only when he experiences what he takes as something he himself really already has. (1982, p. 275)

Learning, and of course teaching too, are not continuous, un-interrupted processes to be designed in advance and optimized scientifically; they are, by their very nature, difficult, fragile, contingent, emotional and unstable. In giving something that the student cannot take, and in working to find what is being given already within themselves, the work of both teacher and student is neither

simple nor easy. In explicating and illustrating these realities, as well as evidence of the creativity inherent in all learning, Agostini with has done a great service. I can only hope that the understandings that she and others are developing find a wide and receptive audience an English language contexts where learning is increasingly ceded to the positivists and technocrats.

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