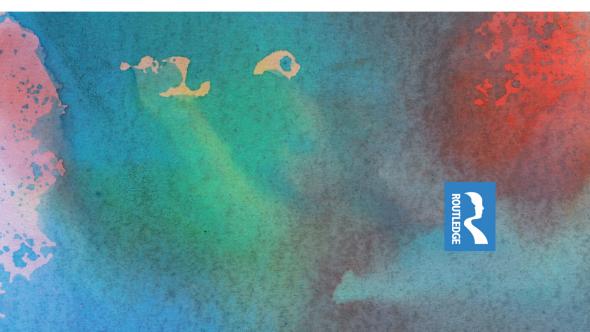# ECO-RATIONAL EDUCATION

## AN EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

Simone Thornton

'At the core of Simone Thornton's concerns is the development of eco-rational thinking as central to environmental education aimed at purposeful engagement in identity formation towards ecological citizenship. *Eco-Rational Education: An Educational Response to Environmental Crisis* innovatively addresses complex concepts and pressing issues and provides a compelling argument for dialogic education that engages students with Indigenous and non-Indigenous socio-political concepts to open conversation on diverse ways of knowing and being in the world. Eloquently written, Thornton offers a pedagogical framework that challenges educators to reposition environmental education as a cross-curriculum learning priority for synthesising curriculum with place-responsive practice and, as such, has published a very timely book that makes a significant contribution to re-visioning education as the socio-cultural reconstruction of the greater community'.

—**Gilbert Burgh**, *Honorary Associate Professor in Philosophy,*
*School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry,*
*The University of Queensland, Australia*


'Thornton's ground-breaking *Eco-Rational Education: An Educational Response to Environmental Crisis* provides a compelling account of why we must upend some deep-seated philosophical and educational assumptions in order to implement effective environmental education in schools. By skilfully interconnecting the ideas of a surprisingly diverse range of scholars, including Albert Camus, Val Plumwood, Mary Graham, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Plato, and James Baldwin, Thornton argues that educational institutions must reject the notion that a key aim of education is the development of individuals with a rational capacity that enables them to dominate nature and "the other"—a form of epistemic violence. Thornton's book is not merely a critique. It also offers an innovative and practical alternative, namely a type of eco-rational education, which draws on ideas from pragmatism, Philosophy for Children, and place-based learning to provide teachers with specific methods they can use to foster transformative environmental education'.

—**Jennifer Bleazby**, *Senior Lecturer, School of Education,*
*Society and Culture, Monash University, Australia*

# Eco-Rational Education

*Eco-Rational Education* proposes an educational response to climate change, environmental degradation, and destructive human relations to ecology through the delivery of critical land-responsive environmental education.

The book argues that education is a powerful vehicle for both social change and cultural reproduction. It proposes that the prioritisation and integration of environmental education across the curriculum is essential to the development of ecologically rational citizens capable of responding to the environmental crisis and an increasingly changing world. Using philosophical analysis, particularly environmental philosophy, pragmatism, and ecofeminism, the book develops an understanding of contemporary issues in education, especially inquiry-based learning as pedagogy, diversifying knowledge, environmental and epistemic justice, climate change education, and citizenship education.

*Eco-Rational Education* will be of interest to researchers and post-graduate students of social and political philosophy, educational philosophy, as well as environmental philosophy, ethics, and teacher education.

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# Eco-Rational Education

An Educational Response to
Environmental Crisis

**Simone Thornton**

This book is dedicated to Mary Graham for years of friendship and edifying conversations.

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# Preface

I plucked *The Myth of Sisyphus*, by French philosopher, author, playwright, and journalist Albert Camus, from my parents' shelf when I was around 13. I had my first experience of the absurd shortly thereafter. I remember sitting on a sparsely occupied train, reading, when a feeling, unfamiliar to me, and unrelated to any goings on in the world around me, quite suddenly descended, or rather, was transmitted from the pages of the book. The thoughts Camus had committed to paper hung in the air like a mist pervading the carriage, obscuring my vision, and making the world strange. The experience stayed with me; however, it was not until many years later, during a conversation at a café, that the wonder I felt at the strangeness of existence found an outlet in the idea for an Honours dissertation on the insights Camus could possibly bring to formal education. Should we introduce children and adolescents to the absurd and the chance of experiencing the strangeness I had felt reading those pages? Would doing so better prepare them to squarely face the ever-increasing uncertainties of life? Camus certainly thought that creation lay in an understanding of the absurd; the strangeness brought about by the meeting of an uncertain world with our desire for certainty. Could philosophical inquiry, imbued with a Camusian twist, make us more comfortable with uncertainty and more creative in our responses to it?

The search for answers to these questions led to an interest in the philosophy of education, as well as a plethora of further questions regarding the development of identity and the way our individual and collective conception of humanity determines the democratic character of future generations, especially their ability to solve problems cooperatively and creatively. Simultaneously, through my interest in environmental philosophy and discussions with my friends and colleagues, I became increasingly aware of the lack of political commitment to public issues crucial to social and ecological well-being, such as climate change and the social inequalities it exacerbates, including the lack of Indigenous representation in social and political institutions, issues too often on the peripheral of educational theory and practice. Through conversations with Mary Graham, a Kombumerri/Wakka woman and philosopher, I came to recognise that all these issues are symptomatic of a

worldview that is set on destroying the source of its security: a stable climate and balanced ecosystem.

As a global phenomenon attributable to human activities, climate change is a spectre haunting the horizon of our ecological existence. If, as Australian ecofeminist philosopher and activist Val Plumwood argues, environmental degradation is a problem that has its epistemic foundation in a dominant form of rationality that not only fails to recognise nature's limits but actively teaches us to transgress them, then, to unravel the threat of ecological irrationality, educators must look for that which lies outside dominant rationality and experiences that do not fit the dominant story. This book, therefore, is also a rallying call to educators, to not continue to do business as usual, but to disrupt an important link in the chain of climate change causation by becoming traitorous to the dominant logic that drives it.

# Acknowledgements

Mathews for agreeing to take part in our World Philosophy Day plans so many years ago, and for the friendship that grew out of a great admiration for her work and life. Thanks also to Elizabeth Fynes-Clinton who introduced me to my very first community of inquiry, and to Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris who both taught me the importance of *active listening* at my very first academic conference, the impression of which has never left me.

And always, thank you to my friends and family, to my daughter, Mum, Dad, Nana, Aunt, Uncle, cousins, and best friends, all of whom I've relied on in one way or another to finish this book. To Dad, who showed me how to think carefully and inventively, all the while with a hammer in his hand. In methodically considering ten different ways to solve a building problem, he demonstrated that while the laws of nature might be fixed, how we respond to them is anything but. To Mum, who, in her role as a psychologist, constantly demonstrated the importance and creative potential of caring thinking. I remember my Nana not so much through her words but her actions, her quiet patience as she supported and facilitated my ventures. And above all, I am forever grateful to my daughter Sahara for her understanding, guidance, and encouragement, and for being the very best part of my world.

# Introduction

**The cost of business as usual**

The consequences of climate change as reported by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) grow increasingly stark with each iteration of the report. The IPCC has shown overwhelmingly that climate change is not only caused by human activity but that a failure to change course is tipping the ecological scales in ways that will have severe and lasting impacts on all life on Earth far into the future.

> The report projects that in the coming decades climate changes will increase in all regions. For 1.5°C of global warming, there will be increasing heat waves, longer warm seasons and shorter cold seasons. At 2°C of global warming, heat extremes would more often reach critical tolerance thresholds for agriculture and health . . .
>
> (IPCC, 2021, n.p.)

On the current business as usual path we are headed for 2.8% of warming or greater, the effects of which would be catastrophic (United Nations Environment Programme, 2022). It is widely acknowledged that the knowledge to change course exists, and that the recommendations from countless scientists have all but been ignored by politicians for decades to harrowing effect. Take the 2018–2019 Australian bushfires as an example; the Morrison government was warned repeatedly that Australia was underprepared for the growing threat from fire caused by climate change, yet officials refused to even meet with experts to discuss the risks (Cox, 2019).

As the climate becomes more unstable and extreme weather events become more likely, habitats that are home to millions of lives, both human and non-human, become increasingly inhospitable, creating a scarcity of resources and driving displacement and conflict. As a result, the issue of security has now shifted towards climate security, that is, there can be no security or prosperity (economic or otherwise) for the eight billion people who inhabit Earth if we continue business as usual. Undeniably, public awareness has contributed greatly to the shift in our thinking about climate change as an urgent political

issue with attendant social, economic, and ecological repercussions. However, the rapid rise of social media has also contributed to a surge of misinformation, as well as disinformation such as fake news and conspiracy theories that promote climate scepticism and denial. Often too, short-term focus on more immediate and seemingly contained issues, such as wars and pandemics, shifts attention away from climate change. Consequently, despite overwhelming scientific agreement on climate change as human induced (i.e., anthropogenic) and directly linked to the burning of fossil fuels, and the release of other greenhouse gases, through manufacturing, transportation, factory farming, and land alteration, public opinion has become polarised, thereby limiting the scope of public discourse and blocking one of the main avenues for democratic correctiveness, namely, an active and informed citizenry.

A common response to adverse daily news, both in Australia and abroad, is that 'education is the answer', as if education alone is a cure-all for social, political, and environmental ills. While education does, indeed, have an important role to play in climate change adaptation and mitigation, it is not enough to simply point to the existing institution and hope for a resolution, especially given education's role in perpetuating environmentally harmful knowledge systems. Unavoidably, primary and secondary schooling, higher education, citizenship education for immigrants, and public education all play a vital role in identity formation, including the process of national identity building, which is reflected in education policies and national curricula, and achieved through teaching methods, classroom content, as well as the hidden curriculum (i.e., lessons that are learnt but not openly intended through implicit academic, social, and cultural messaging). Not surprisingly, '[s]uccessive governments, both conservative and progressive, will, therefore, closely guard education as an institution for their own political agendas and inculcation of values' (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 4), the very same governments that have been so slow to act on climate change. What then is an effective form of education in light of climate change? This book is a search not for a single answer but for the conditions under which multiple place-responsive answers may be formulated.

Education has the potential to empower and motivate students, from children to young adults, to become active citizens, able to face and respond to the challenges of climate change. Given the extreme threat that climate change poses to places, species, people's livelihoods, their homes, and their emotional and physical well-being, educating the next generation to mitigate and adapt to climate change *must* be a national and international priority. Yet, in many countries it is not clear that it is. For example, 'in Australia, there is no substantive national climate change education or curriculum', even though for teachers 'what they do, what they teach and the possibilities they imagine often start and end with the curriculum' (Gobby & Variyan, 2021, n.p.). That 'Australia has not designed, implemented nor funded a coherent educational approach to our climate change emergency' (Whitehouse & Larri, 2019, n.p.) is a serious problem if we are to garner the political will necessary to mitigate against the worst effects of climate change.

Consensus over what should be included in climate change education, to make sure it is 'fit for purpose, and effective', along with 'how to assess, evaluate and research climate change education' has not been forthcoming (Reid, 2019, pp. 767–768). Moreover, a recent study by Bleazby et al. (2021) interviewed 17 teachers from different schools across four Australian states regarding their implementation of climate change education. The teachers reported feeling a moral obligation to teach about climate change, but also feared teaching what they perceived to be a controversial and politicised topic and, as a result, were largely uncertain as to how to approach its teaching. The study suggests that the ineffective nature of current climate change education, combined with the lack of consensus on best practice, and the contentious nature of climate change, causes frustration for many teachers otherwise willing and wanting to educate students on the topic of climate change. The study also identified blocks to teaching about climate change, experienced by the teachers who were interviewed. These include: (i) 'push back' from students, parents, and other staff, (ii) concerns about being 'too political', (iii) policies and curriculum documents that do not explicitly encourage or worse actively impede climate change education, (iv) apathy, ambivalence, or lack of support from students and staff, and (v) lack of resources, including teacher education and professional development. Such concerns can result in teachers using potentially problematic pedagogies when they do venture to teach about climate change or in them avoiding the topic altogether (Plutzer et al., 2016, p. 17).

The socio-political dimensions of climate change, including personal, ethical, and cultural considerations, therefore, call for improved teacher education and institutional support to enhance climate literacy and civic literacy related to sustainability and environmental ethics. Otherwise, a piecemeal, non-directive, and depoliticised approach to climate change education carries not only an opportunity cost to improve climate literacy and civic literacy but also largely leaves the work of framing the way that students—who will grow up to be adult citizens—think and feel about climate change to politicians, corporations, the media, scientists, and activists (e.g., informed school students like Greta Thunberg), with very mixed results. Although the collective effort of all these actors is important for combating climate change, the effectiveness of each comes down to their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, ethics, and vested interests. The media, for example, can just as easily promote climate denial as it can climate concern.

The IPCC 2022 *Mitigation of Climate Change Summary for Policymakers* states that

> [c]limate governance is most effective when it integrates across multiple policy domains, helps realise synergies and minimise trade-offs, and connects national and sub-national policymaking levels (high confidence). Effective and equitable climate governance builds on engagement with civil society actors, political actors, businesses, youth, labour, media, Indigenous Peoples and local communities (medium confidence).
>
> (p. 8)

Education is key in changing attitudes, habits, and behaviours of citizens and by extension the institutions of which they are a part, institutions that can either contribute to or fail to mitigate climate change. But as I mentioned earlier, not all education is valuable; a short glance at history reveals a plethora of examples of educational methods that we would look upon as anything but desirable or ethical today.

The text that follows is an attempt to map some of the varied and complex socio-political terrain, from which ethical and responsive form of education may be formulated. I hold that knowledge of this terrain will be especially necessary for the implementation of effective and ethical climate change education, the need and desire for which is already evident.

> While children are interested in the physical science behind climate change, their questions show they are equally concerned with how we should act on climate as a society. This suggests that when climate change is taught in schools, it should be taught holistically. While understanding the drivers of climate change is important, teaching must also address the social challenges we face and the decision-making processes this wicked problem demands.
>
> (Mocatta & Lucas, 2021, n.p.)

Climate change education must present a multifaceted picture of climate change which addresses not only the science of climate change but also the cultural, economic, emotional, ethical, historical, institutional, individual, political, social, and technological dimensions. That is to say, it should have a place in every classroom and subject. Climate change education, therefore, must be interdisciplinary, integrated across all learning areas of national, state, or school curricula, and flexible enough for individual schools to adapt to the context of their regions, provide educational opportunities to develop ecologically minded citizens, and prepare teachers to facilitate discussions around controversial, highly politicised socio-political issues. For education to do so, however, it must itself become ethical, that is, it must break the chains that bind it to its colonial past, in the form of ongoing assimilation into a system that is ecological irrational and harmful to other ways of knowing, being, and doing.

## About this book

This book falls into the category of philosophy of education, an underdeveloped and often misunderstood field of study within philosophy if compared to, say, philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, or philosophy of religion. Yet, philosophy of education is crucial to education in a democracy, as it addresses philosophical questions concerning the nature, aims, and problems of education, which serve to inform educational planning, curriculum design, pedagogy, and teaching practices, as well as education policy. Rather than draw

only on the existing literature on philosophy of education, my aim, first and foremost, was to seek out philosophers whose concepts and arguments may provide insights into education, even if they have not directly commented on it. This book is also an investigation into the relatively new field of educational philosophy (not to be confused with the philosophy of education), in which philosophy functions educationally, such as the Philosophy for Children approach to education in which the community of inquiry pedagogy is central to educational practice. Indeed, this approach is central to the pedagogy I develop here, albeit not without criticism and recommendations for reconstruction as a pedagogy for environmental education.

Philosophy is often lampooned for its propensity to turn the most common of concepts inside out and on its head, making the familiar strange as if it were a first encounter. This strangeness plays an important part in learning about and questioning entrenched ideas that have become habits so commonplace they are taken for granted and, indeed, become assumptions that then become structural. Questioning ideas is vital to what Plumwood calls 'correctiveness', the ability to change course, fix what is not working, and reimagine problems and the processes that led to them, all crucial to a functional democracy which, in turn, is necessary to address climate change. A focus of the book, then, is education's role in developing the capacities and dispositions necessary for civic engagement and the democratic correction of social and political institutions, capacities which require the re-thinking of our approach to curriculum design, pedagogical practice, and the classroom itself, a reorganisation of the way we think about and imagine ourselves and our relationships with the more-than-human world.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the relevance of the moral dimensions of Albert Camus' philosophy to education. His appeal to the absurd captures the unreasonable fit between epistemology and ontology, between what we think and how our thinking maps onto the world. Camus maintained that denial of the absurd—a denial inherent in rationality that seeks certainty, that seeks to overcome the absurd—lies at the root of domination. This presents a challenge for educational theory and practice as such denial is a form of epistemic harm, or as he calls it, philosophical suicide. Thus, recognition of the absurd offers a way of overcoming domination and thereby mitigating conflict. To establish a pedagogical starting point using Camus' philosophy, I propose that the task of education is not the production of rational individuals, but the fostering of lucid individuals, students with the capacity for sustained awareness of the absurd.

Plumwood also thought that rationality needed an overhaul. She points out that if we consider the damage done to the environment, to our life support system, what we think of as rational is, to a large extent, irrational. Environmental degradation, resulting from human domination of the environment, she argues, stems from our failure to acknowledge our human *being* as a part of *nature*, a failure that creates a *stark separation* of humans from nature, upon which much of Western philosophy and by extension Western knowledge is

built. Thus, in Chapter 2, I argue that Western socio-political institutions, including education, are incapable of responding to environmental crises, as they are implicated in their creation.

Using the colonisation of Australia as an example, Chapter 3 continues to trace stark separations through the logic that underpins the domination of nature and Other. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's conception of epistemic violence describes well colonisations legacy of harmful thought, which I argue, following Patrick Wolfe, is ongoing, perpetuated by myths of reversal, where a wrongdoing is attributed to the victim of the wrongdoing. Myths of reversal are in themselves epistemically violent and often used as a way of justifying physical violence. A myth of reversal is a story that uses the suffering of 'the Other' as a weapon, turning their own narrative against them. In the case of *Terra Nullius*, such myths often stemmed from an ethical failure to recognise 'prior presences', to use Plumwood's terminology. *Terra Nullius* was and is used as a justification for the theft of the land we now call Australia. The failure to recognise prior presences is a systematic failure of shared socio-political epistemic frameworks; a failure to see the world without first committing philosophical suicide.

In Chapter 4, I take us to the heart of Plato's heavenistic philosophy and explore the ways in which assumptions about truth, stemming from the Forms (his conception of true knowledge), have cascaded down through history, shaping the way the West views truth and logic. I investigate how hyper-separations have formed dominant logic and how they, in turn, inform modern-day institutional practices which have fundamentally altered human relations with the non-human world. Dominant logic is an unseen force that influences not only the epistemic but the physical ordering of a society by seeking to remove the Other from moral consideration and, subsequently, control their behaviour.

Chapter 5 draws on a speech by James Baldwin on the topic of structural racism. He highlights how the system has been created by and rests on the dehumanisation of the Other. I argue along with Baldwin that it is not the Other that must change, but the system that perpetuates othering. Using Lisa Guenther's research on solitary confinement I outline the role punishment plays in the creation of such a society along with the individual who perpetuates it. It is often these individuals, those who benefit most from unjust social orderings, who dismiss attempts to change the system as 'utopian'. The 'utopia objection' is a common reason given for maintaining rather than disrupting education, which is often assimilationist and epistemically violent towards Other. Epistemic violence contributes to othering in the classroom and, therefore, impacts students' abilities to learn. As such, the onus for preventing such violence largely falls on the teacher, who must be equipped to first recognise it.

Chapter 6 introduces Philosophy for Children, and particularly its community of inquiry pedagogy, a model of educational philosophy centred on developing students' understanding of the world through dialogic inquiry that is student-centred, community-focused, and self-correcting. However,

concerns have been raised within the Philosophy for Children scholarly community over epistemic issues related to bias, prejudice, neutrality, and normativity, which affect teaching practice and the assignment of stimulus materials for discussion and thereby hamper its potential for self-correction. In response, I argue for the reintegration of pragmatist epistemology into the community of inquiry, with the aim of cultivating collective doubt to foster self-corrective philosophical discussion. I also explore the educative potential of social reconstruction learning, which re-emphasises John Dewey's experiential education by engaging students with their local communities to reconstruct real-world social problems.

Chapter 7 provides an account of eco-rational education. Central to my claim is the need to disrupt the colonial structures and Eurocentric discourses that have dominated educational theory and practice. To conclude I argue that experiential education that synthesises curriculum, pedagogy, and practical learning activities to reconstruct students' experience and knowledge is necessary to environmental education as is the introduction of multiple knowledge systems to disrupt ongoing eco-irrationality and epistemic violence and begin inquiry from land. Pedagogies of land are introduced as exemplars of place-based education that engage with Indigenous understandings of land as teacher and, thus, allow students to critically reflect on their own understanding of their relationship to place.

# 1 Albert Camus

## Insights into moral education

### Introduction

Habits of thought weave the social fabric around us, helping to create our shared existence. They built up over time and are passed on and perpetuated through institutions such as the family, politics, and education, the very institutions they help to create. These habits of mind structure the world and make it familiar and stable, allowing us to make predictions, and, subsequently, to put certain ideas into action while simultaneously preventing the translation of others into shared thought and physical form. The ideas and the actions they birth have social and political consequences; they destroy, create, maintain, perpetuate, improve, or overthrow political, bureaucratic, economic, social, and environmental systems. Which ideas thrive and which are suffocated then carry an ethical dimension.

An example of the interaction between ideas and the structures they perpetuate is found in a fictional story, albeit inspired by Hermann Hesse's (1971) memories of World War II. The passage highlights the ability of the outsider to question and find structurally embedded ideas and values strange. The perspective of the outsider contrasts with those immersed in the systems they have accepted and habituated to without reflection or understanding. It also demonstrates how the failure of the insider to question supports the dominant social order. For the sake of brevity, the backstory is that the main character, the man asking the questions, has been off in the ether, wandering in the cosmos for some years and, upon his return, has found that, due to the war, society has been restructured and not for the better. The social order he once knew is now gone; the human world to him is now unrecognisable, and for that reason, unnavigable. The main character tells the story as follows:

> 'Tell me: why is the whole world making these enormous efforts? Putting up with such hardships, with all these laws, these thousands of bureaus and bureaucrats—what is all this meant to preserve and safeguard?'
>
> The gentleman looked at me in amazement.
>
> 'What a question!' he cried, shaking his head. 'You know we're at war: the whole world is at war. That's what we are preserving, what we make

laws and endure hardships for. The war! Without these enormous exer-
tions and achievements our armies wouldn't be able to fight for a week.
They'd starve—we can't allow that!'

'Yes', I said slowly, 'you've got something there! The war, in other
words, is a treasure that must be preserved at all cost. Yes, but—I know
it's an odd question—why do you value the war so highly? Is it worth so
much? Is war really a treasure?'

The official shrugged his shoulders and gave me a pitying look. He
saw that I just didn't understand.

(p. 27)

I find this story compelling for two reasons. The first is the emphasis on habit-
uation. In the larger narrative Hesse writes:

When the potatoes gave out, we had to put up with sawdust gruel—they
season it with tar now, it's surprisingly tasty—we all thought
it would be unbearable. But then we got used to it. And the same with
everything else.

(p. 27)

His description of the consumption of sawdust gruel flavoured with tar gives
the reader a visceral understanding of the lengths to which people will go
to adapt to a particular system of organisation (or dominant logic), in this
case, a system organised to support the war: 'If there is still any law, order,
or thought in the world, we have the war to thank for it' (p. 28), notes the
bureaucrat. The second reason, the outsider's questioning of the value of
adapting to such a system of violence, is equally important: 'Is the war really
a treasure?' To ask such a question is to go to the heart of social organisa-
tion and to question the very structures of which we are a part. The official's
reaction is telling, it is he who does not understand that things could be
other than they are, and yet his look *reverses* the situation: the 'bureaucrat'
thinks it is the questioner who does not understand. The bureaucrat has never
thought to question the law and order brought in to protect the war, he has
never thought to ask: 'What is all this meant to preserve and safeguard?' This
is a significant question, as the ultimate cost of war is life. How is it that such
an obvious cost has escaped his attention, or at the very least, not weighed
in his calculations of war as a treasure? And yet history is full of examples of
such reductive calculations.

Consider the violence in Australia for example, perpetuated against Indig-
enous peoples in the *ongoing* struggle for land and sovereignty—their land
and county forcibly occupied and colonised by Europeans who carried out
massacres to expand the British colony during The Frontier Wars, a series of
conflicts and battles that happened in the first 140 years of colonisation and
settlement or more aptly invasion of Australia. It is easy, and perhaps for many
comfortable, to think of such violence as in the past. However, colonisation,

as Patrick Wolfe (2006) so aptly puts it, 'is a structure not an event' (p. 388). Just as the bureaucrat emersed in the systems of war cannot see the strangeness of those systems, nor the structures that support them, speaking of the 'we' of the coloniser, Plumwood (2002) writes: 'we are much more able to see oppression in the past or in contexts where it is not our group who is cast as the oppressor' (p. 8). The failure to see and feel the strangeness of our situatedness is, I contend, an ethical failure caused by our education and habituation to the way things are. The failure to imagine life other than it is can often result in ethical harm to those who live lives other than the ones to which we are accustomed. To further illustrate this ethical failure, I turn to Camus, ever the outsider, who, finding himself caught in the same war that Hesse was commenting on also questioned the value of war, asked, although not in so many words, why is war thought to be more important than preserving and safeguarding life? In so many ways, it is absurd that such a question needs to be asked, and I read Camus' literary and philosophical works as attempts to demonstrate this absurdity.

Born in November 1913, less than a year before World War I began, Camus was still a young man when World War II began. He lived in a period very much marked by death. His two philosophical essays, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1977a), first published in French as *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942), and *The Rebel* (1977b), published in French as *L'Homme révolté* (1951), were attempts to address the culture of death that he witnessed. Received religion had set moral limits to life, the most important being 'Thou shalt not kill', but Friedrich Nietzsche's infamous declaration 'God is dead', in addition to the chaos of the two world wars and the rise of communism, had widely placed the validity of moral limits in question. The advent of nihilism, from the point of view of philosophy and the mountain of bodies accumulated through the course of the wars, seemed to have done away with morality. Camus (1977b) explained that if 'one believes in nothing, if nothing makes sense, if we can assert no value whatsoever, everything is permissible and nothing is important' (p. 13). Following this line of thought, a strange and terrible freedom is obtained, a freedom from moral limits that greatly troubled Camus. This is not to say that Camus advocated a return to dogma, as he thought dogma itself guilty of murder. As we will see, the ethic that he argued for was much subtler.

For Camus, writing was a way of life. In his words, it is 'an attempt to understand the time I live in' (p. 11). If the time happened to be one marked by death, particularly, murder and suicide, then it was to these grim topics that he would set his pen. Amidst the horror of war, it was to the logic that proposed the death of moral limits that he aimed his critique. The world wars are in the past, but the killing continues; the places, names, and faces change but Camus' critique, unfortunately, remains relevant. History remembers the world wars as declared and recognised wars between specific countries, and yet, according to Camus, the justifications leading up to and following many of the specific acts of murder and violence, those which make up the statistics,

were less than clear, and poorly, if at all, understood. These justifications, he thought, must be understood, as they 'cripple judgement' and halt action to prevent violence. As a pied noir, a French citizen of Algerian birth, Camus was something of an outsider in French society. As an outsider, looking in on the war, he thought it an absurd justification that we, as living creatures, could structure society in such a way that taking life can become normalised to the point of unquestioned habituation, often achieved through an administrative stroke of a pen. Whatever else it may be, the perspective of the outsider is the value I find in Camus' works that has relevance to the kind of education I propose.

Camus' moral philosophy has been influential on literary and political thought. 'The question now becomes', as David E. Denton (1964) asked, 'does the moral philosophy of Camus have relevance for education?' (p. 99). I will argue that it does, which will provide a starting point for a pedagogy of lucidity that will underpin the educational philosophy I develop in the following chapters. By positing the absurd, both as an explanation and a feeling to capture the tension, or unreasonable fit, between meaning-seeking humans and a meaningless world, Camus was in a sense going to the heart of what it means to be human, which, when taken as a question, speaks to the heart of educational philosophy. He argued against the reduction of humanity to reason, which he saw in the suffering that surrounded him while embedded in the conflict of World War II, and thereby spoke of the need to counter the mechanistic certainty of rule-based systems of politics and ethics with human emotion. To use Camus' (1977b) words, 'who can weigh the greatest conquests of reason or of force against the sufferings they represent, if his heart is blind to the simplest form of sympathy and his mind averse to all justice!' (p. 13). To stand with those who suffer, against any form of reasoning that would seek to justify and increase suffering, was Camus' idea of justice. To resist any logic that would sacrifice human well-being for an imagined future was his ethic and his politic. As Matthew Sharpe (2015) puts it, the absurd as 'epistemic humility makes imperative in the political realm a principled opposition to . . . all ideologies which claim the right to silence, enslave, systematically deceive or kill' (p. 26).

Denton (1964) thinks that the educational implications of Camus' philosophy directly 'bear on the nature and purpose of education' (p. 99). In response, he sought to expand the task of education from the development of humans to the development of moral humans, defined as lucid individuals who live the *philosophy of limits*, which is crucial for human inquiry to facilitate the tension, mentioned above, between meaning-seeking humans and a meaningless world. Denton rejects what he sees as the major objective of education, namely, the production of 'a rational man or social animal' or to 'discover the values inherent in rationality' (p. 127) and concludes that 'if we take our cue from Camus, education will have a new primary objective: to produce the moral individual—moral because, in the face of the absurd, he lucidly lives the philosophy of limits' (p. 127). His conclusion is based on three salient features

of Camus' philosophy: '(1) the absurd equation, (2) the law of limits, and (3) his theory of [hu]man within the absurd equation' (p. 127), all of which will provide the basis of my discussion of Camus' contribution to education in this and later chapters.

## Resisting certainty

In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus (1977a) illustrates absurdity in the plight of Sisyphus, a being condemned by the gods to push a boulder up a mountain, only to watch it roll back down again, descending after it, to begin again, in an endless cycle of struggle and release. As the Greek myth goes, Sisyphus' meaningless labour was his punishment for displeasing the gods. What he did to displease them depends on which version of the story you read, as Camus gleefully notes: 'If one believes Homer, Sisyphus was the wisest and most prudent of mortals. According to another tradition, however, he was disposed to practice the profession of highwayman. I see no contradiction in this' (p. 107). What is clear is that Camus has his own reasons for believing Sisyphus condemned: 'His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing' (p. 108). According to Camus, the cycle of Sisyphus' struggle parallels the human struggle to find meaning or understanding of life's purpose; a struggle that is inevitably met with the disappointment of universal silence.

Sisyphus knows his fate, he knows the why of his existence, an eternity of the same action is his punishment, and he can name his punisher. In these ways, his situation differs from ours; we cannot know the why in the same way he could, we do not know our fate, and we have many reasons to doubt that fate exists. However, humans can expect to die sooner or later, but before that happens, most of us can also expect to be happy at times and suffer at other times, and this is a fate of a kind. To come close to truth on a topic, such as the meaning of life, we must generalise, although what makes up a life are the particulars that fill in the time between birth and death. Many people just get on with life; they focus on the particulars, leaving the grander scheme of things to itself. Others search for meaning in direct contradiction to the knowns of existence, in the unknowable; following a desire to know the unknowable, to make finite sense of an infinite universe, they impose meaning on it. They have faith, or as Camus (1977a) described it, unfounded 'hope' that the universe will unfold along the lines of their kind of reasoning. It is such reasoning that Camus finds irrational, as those that engage in it 'deify what crushes them [the absurd] and find reason to hope in what impoverishes them. That forced hope is religious in all of them. . . . Nothing logically prepares this reasoning. I can call it a leap' (p. 36).

Camus resists *leaping* into hope to demonstrate to us the absurdity of our attempts to make the world reasonable. 'For me', he says, 'the sole datum is the absurd' (p. 34), the sole truth in a universe of constructed fictions.

The feeling of absurdity arises not from the mere scrutiny of facts or impressions, but

> bursts from the comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality, between an action and the world that transcends it. The absurd is essentially a divorce. It lies in neither of the elements compared; it is born of their confrontation.
>
> (p. 33)

It is the gap between our desire to know the world—to find comfort, reason, and certitude in it—and the indifference to our desires we find in the world when we look with lucidity upon existence. But does a lack of certainty of meaning mean that life is pointless? Does knowledge of the absurd mean that life is not worth living?

Of the absurd, Camus maintained that it 'is essential to know whether one can live with it or whether, on the other hand, logic commands one to die of it' (p. 50). Must we assume that life cannot be lived without meaning? Camus' response is that although people have 'pretended to believe that refusing to grant a meaning to life necessarily leads to declaring that it is not worth living [. . .] there is no necessary common measure between these two judgments' (p. 15). When we ask for a meaning for life, what we are usually asking for is a singular reply, an all-encompassing meaning, something to explain our existence, a key to making the infinite finite. While Camus thinks this cannot be found, the lack of it is not enough to negate the value of life. Death alone can do this by extinguishing both value and meaning, because both are dependent on there being someone to find meaning and to give value, hence the common leap to an all-knowing God as a continual source of meaning.[1] In a universe free from ultimate meaning, life must be preserved for meaning to be preserved; the destruction of life then becomes tragic not only for the loss of life but for the loss of meaning. Such loss is brought into particularly sharp focus when we consider the destruction of culture brought about by colonisation. The prevention of cultural reproduction through avenues of assimilation (such as education) is less overtly violent than war, but is, nonetheless, harmful and often serves the same end: cultural death.

The reasons that meaning and life are both destroyed are Camus' starting points for inquiry. To help illuminate Camus' reasoning further, Miranda Fricker's (2013) general point on philosophical method, that the negative imprint reveals the form of the positive value, may be helpful.

> If one wants to discover the conditions of a given positive social value (justice, freedom, independence, equality . . .), it tends to be instructive to look first at the various ways in which it is likely to fail. This method as applied to any kind of justice simply reflects the fact that just social systems, even in their most historically stable forms, are sustained under pressures toward collapse into injustice.
>
> (p. 1318)

Camus is in a sense also starting from the 'negative imprint', as life, too, is sustained under pressure of collapse into death. Staying alive is a Sisyphusian task, but unlike Sisyphus, we have the option to stop. There is, as Camus (1977a) says, something to be learned about living by asking why some people choose to take that 'subtle step when the mind opt[s] for death?' (p. 13). Rather than viewing suicide as a defect in the human psyche or as a crime that one commits,[2] Camus takes the view that the possibility of opting out of life confers a value on choosing not to; it confers a value on living, one that is reaffirmed with each breath, and denied by those who choose to stop breathing. Put another way, living is determined by other values, as Camus explains:

> Living, naturally, is never easy. You continue making the gestures commanded by existence for many reasons, the first of which is *habit*. Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized, even instinctively, the *ridiculous* character of that habit, the absence of profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation and the uselessness of suffering. What then is that incalculable feeling that deprives the mind of the sleep necessary to life? A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly *the feeling of absurdity*.
>
> (p. 13, *italics* added)

The value we place on life, divorced from any outside omniscient valuer, is of an individual nature and linked to our sense of meaning, which is shaken by the feeling of absurdity. When Camus talks of the sleep necessary to life, he speaks not just of the inability to sleep due to worry that most of us experience from time to time, but primarily of the illusions of meaning that keep our awareness of our impending end drowsy. When we stop to think about it, a simple morning ritual of making coffee comes replete with explanations, values, and meanings that give the world a sense of familiarity. Our habits, taught and acquired from birth through to death, in many ways orient us within our worlds; they guide us through life without the need to think too deeply as to why we perform them, without the need to question why we live the way we do. When the need arises, we are thrown into disequilibrium. The feeling of absurdity describes the restlessness and frustration of a person grasping for meaning, searching for old narratives and yet finding none. The part of us that is aware of our existence cries out for acknowledgement, for approval, for certainty, for some reason for our existence. The world beyond the human, however, is indifferent to our calls.

The lack of a stable conception of meaning, Camus thinks, can lead to the taking of one's own life, but equally he thinks it does not and should not do so, for 'even if one does not believe in God [ultimate meaning], suicide is not legitimate' (p. 7). Rather, the logic of the absurd can lead us to lucidity, which

is sustained awareness of the absurd. It can lead to a fallibilistic understanding of knowledge as ultimately uncertain and, further, of life as unstable, finite, temporal, and no less individually worth living for being so. Camus teaches us to question and confront uncomfortable information rather than hiding it from view, for doing so decreases our awareness of the world's limitations, which in turn decreases our ability to respond to situations that do not adhere to our illusions, thereby limiting our potential for creating and recreating meaning. Conversely, lucidity leads to an increased ability to construct and reconstruct meaning, and thereby to an increased ability to adapt to the situations that life presents us, which has application for climate change education.

Increasingly climate change is being viewed as an existential threat, which has the potential to create an existential crisis for those concerned for the future. Our inability so far to adequately respond to the climate crisis speaks, in part, to our inability to face difficult information without leaping into either hope or despair and, thus, leaping out of the absurd and leaving behind lucidity. Hope, to Camus, is an illogical desire for an outcome stripped of an understanding of the steps needed to bring it about. Hope propels one out of the discomfort and uncertainty needed to drive inquiry into the particulars of the situation and, therefore, blocks the acquisition of knowledge and the questioning of certainty required for the reconstruction of the habitual chains that tie us to our shared destruction. If climate change is understood as a global phenomenon divorced from individual and communal contributions to the problem, then in the face of the inevitable and the ineffable, either hope or despair is often thought to be the only logical outcomes, and as a result, an immanent catastrophe becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as those engaged in such thinking are less likely to act to avoid it. Both hope and despair require logical leaps. Hope is often a leap of faith, a unfounded wish for a desired outcome, and despair is a leap into the abyss, a state of mind marked by a sheer failure to consider matters due to a belief in the futility of all action. They are both unwarranted as the future is always uncertain, and we must, Camus argues, give all to the present to ensure there is a future. Faced with the possibility of nuclear war, an ongoing existential crisis, although one we have in many ways now normalised, Camus thought that to live in either hope or the depths of despair is to commit philosophical suicide. Any attempt to explain away the absurd, to refuse to face it for what it is by assuming the absolute meaningfulness or certainty of a belief, is philosophical suicide. Philosophical suicide is the negation of lucidity and is, therefore, the rejection of the limits of reason. For if we understand the absurd to be a constant tension between what we think we know and the world that cares not for our theories, then we come to see that all knowledge is fallible and contingent. Reason that posits absolute certainty, Camus thinks to be unreasonable, as it negates the absurd, going beyond what it is possible to know. To be lucid is to have clarity and courage to resist all the comforting illusions and self-deceptions, to not be tempted to leap into assumptions of, and find refuge in, absolute certainty.

Lucidity lies at the end of a sequence of steps that commences with the recognition of absurdity, a process Camus calls a method.³ Camus' understanding of absurdity, as a concept, extends its common usage, as a quality or state of being silly, ridiculous or unreasonable. For Camus, absurdity is part of being human. We *recognise* absurdity in the solipsistic universes surrounding us, that is, in the lives of others. To recognise this absurdity is to recognise the *ridiculous character of habit*, to recognise that the 'mechanical aspect of [human] gestures, make silly everything that surrounds them' (p. 21). We see such absurdity when we witness the contradictory actions of others in relation to their environment, to their 'hoped for' outcome. To use Camus' example: 'If I see a man armed only with a sword attack a group of machine-guns, I will consider his act to be absurd' (p. 33). But this absurdity has not yet touched the heart. The next step takes us inward. The *feeling* of absurdity, which 'is not, for all that, the notion of the absurd' (p. 32), Camus describes as *elusive, indeterminate, and vague*. It is phenomenological, we experience it first-hand as happening in our own solipsistic universe. It is the 'worm' in the 'heart' (p. 13) that can strike at any moment, 'on a street-corner or in a restaurant's revolving door' (pp. 18–19). It is the void that is felt when connections with the world and others are lost. It is 'that odd state of soul in which the void becomes eloquent, in which the chain of daily gestures is broken, in which the heart vainly seeks the link that will connect it again' (p. 19). This step concludes in a 'revolt of the flesh', but the absurd has 'not been exhausted' and a 'step lower and strangeness creeps in' (p. 20). Once absurdity is felt 'the primitive hostility of the world rises up to face us across millennia' (p. 20). It is then that we witness the world's raw sense data without translation into the familiar, the conceptual, and the habitual. The feeling of absurdity strips from the world 'the images and designs that we had attributed to it beforehand', and the world then 'evades us because it becomes itself again' (p. 20). Seeing the world as itself we recognise absurdity, we perceive 'that the world is "dense", sensing to what degree a stone is foreign and irreducible to us, with what intensity nature or a landscape can negate us' (p. 20); we sense the absurd.

The absurd once felt leaves us with a choice, either to remain with the feeling and translate it into lucidity or to leap out of discomfort into hope or despair. The 'why' arises, and once the questions begin, they do not end. Camus (1977a) illustrates this in the following way:

> Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm—this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the 'why' arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement.
>
> (p. 19)

Recognising our habits, we come to question the beliefs that underlie our habits and why we do what we do. Undertaking such an inquiry can cause

us to feel out of step with our lives—a potentially unpleasant experience. Our conscious awareness of our mental constructs may be the cause of some angst, as often these same constructs are a source of comfort, but, as Camus suggests, questioning them can also spark our creativity.

Understanding the force of habit, having the ability to stop our habitual chains of action long enough to question our judgements and re-evaluate our beliefs, is lucidity. The path towards lucidity begins where certainty ends. Matthew Lipman (1973) recounts the plight of the Greek mythical figure Prometheus and his experience of disequilibrium, which for our purposes we can think of as the feeling of absurdity. In retaliation for stealing fire to give to humans, Zeus had Prometheus chained to a mountain and sent an eagle to feast on his liver by day, only to have it regenerate by night, allowing the cycle to start afresh the following day. Importantly for us, Zeus casts Prometheus into an abyss and it is here that Lipman picks up on the story.

> Like any Titan, Prometheus had feared nothing. Now, nothing envelops him, and he is terrified. After all, he had loved the light and warmth of the sun, and the solid ground beneath his feet. The dark utter empti-ness of his exile, its terrible coldness, with nothing to touch or hold to, reduces him to wretchedness. He has neither memory nor environment. He can think, but he can remember nothing to think of. He can per-ceive, but there is nothing around him that is perceivable.
>
> (p. 501)

Lipman goes on to recount Prometheus' emergence from this state of abject wretchedness to the development of an awareness of his actions through focusing his attention on movement in a way that borders on artistic expression. It is in the perfection of each movement, driven by experimentation, not for any end goal as he has no hope of return from exile nor any memory of a place to return to for that matter, but for reasons of pure existence: 'In a sense, he owes them [these movements] his life' (p. 501). Divorced from his past experiences and his physical connections with the external world, Prometheus strengthens the only connection left open to him, that of his mind with his body. Unlike Descartes' famed retreat into thought that provided him with absolute certainty of his existence through self-knowledge rather than bodily presence (discussed later and in Chapters 6 and 7), Prometheus finds comfort in the exploration of his movements, in the interaction of his thoughts with his body, or as Denton would put it, his feelings with his cognition. When his memory returns, it is within this new framework of understanding of self that his thoughts are assimilated, and then re-explored and re-interpreted and a new layer of meaning created. As his wounds heal and his memory returns

> each act takes on far greater significance, as his relevant past can be brought to bear upon the present. Every structuring acquires a richer

ambience of meanings, unexpected conjunctions appear, and for every new illumination there are untold new mysteries.

(p. 501)

Prometheus' understanding of this process of creation of meaning is what makes him lucid.

At this juncture, it should be noted that while the experience of absurdity can lead to lucidity, equally it can lead us to philosophical suicide if we cannot translate such experience into an intellectual understanding of the absurd. Camus uses absurdity to highlight the ridiculous and pointless nature of people's certainty in their reasoning, justifications, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and so forth. In 'Homage to an Exile', Camus (1988) writes: 'Many men have sacrificed everything to errors, and I have always thought that heroism and sacrifice were not enough to justify a cause' (p. 99). Note the use of the word 'justify'. Further, in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus (1977a) writes:

> I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living. I see others paradoxically getting killed for the ideas or illusions that give them a reason for living (what is called a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying).
>
> (pp. 11–12)

Both quotes are examples of philosophical suicide, reason that seeks to close the distance between the absurd (the fallibility of knowledge) and the external world. To preserve the absurd, we must preserve life. Camus, then, is highlighting that people failing to recognise the absurd often die for nonsensical reasons. This is a fundamental point in Camus' (1977a) philosophy, and one of the overarching reasons he argues for the importance of lucidity. For if one can see the fallibility of their justifications, they would be less likely to be committed to them to the point of suicide or murder, as both require an irrational depth of conviction. For Camus, 'the absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world. This must not be forgotten. This must be clung to because the whole consequence of a life can depend on it' (pp. 31–32). Reasons for suffering and death are the very reasons Camus claims we must revolt against, as I will explore in greater detail in the next section through the example of capital punishment.

### Resisting harmful justification

In 'Reflections on the Guillotine', Camus (1963) claims that in a world free from knowledge of ultimate truth, 'capital punishment upsets the only indisputable human solidarity—our solidarity against death—and it can be legitimized only by a truth or a principle that is superior to man' (p. 158). The 'truth' or 'principle' is the justification used to make an act or event, which we would otherwise see as unjust without the justification, appear just.

He described his father's reaction as witness to the reality that the idea of capital punishment created. His father, we are told, agreed with the punishment prescribed, given the particularities of the case in question, so much so that for the first time

> [h]e got up in the dark to go to the place of execution at the other end of town amid a great crowd of people. What he saw that morning he never told anyone. My mother relates merely that he came rushing home, his face distorted, refused to talk, lay down for a moment on the bed, and suddenly began to vomit. *He had just discovered the reality hidden under the noble phrases with which it was masked.*
>
> <div align="right">(p. 132, <em>italics</em> added)</div>

His father had in a sense discovered the absurd. What he discovered was not the reality he had expected; his sense of justice was not satisfied, and his sense of morality, the same sense that drove him to get up in the dark to witness such an event, was not vindicated. Instead, he witnessed 'the obscenity hidden under the verbal cloak' (p. 133), the gap between the reasoning that leads to the event and the reality that arises once the reasoning is translated into action.

Any painter struggling to realise a vision on canvas is all too frustratingly aware of their limitations regarding perfecting the translation of their vision from head to world. Few possess the skill to do so effectively, and I doubt if any have ever done so perfectly. Those who come close are usually celebrated for their achievement, for what they can *create*, what they are able to bring into the world. In the case of a painter, the paint that they apply to the canvas creates an image, but not only this, the image creates a reaction in the viewer. Whether it be one of shock or admiration or disgust is not the point; all feelings provoke thoughts and stir beliefs that go on to create other realties, some perhaps anticipated or desired, most not. We would not usually think of the decapitation of another being as a creation, granted, but it is in the sense of bringing something into the world, by subtracting a life, thereby creating a world in which that person no longer exists; the actions of the executer create an altered reality, one that affects the viewer in diverse ways, although as we will see, rarely in the ways intended. The application of paint to a blank canvas destroys the white to create an image. Decapitation destroys a human to create what? Justice? Peace? Morality? An abstract concept or greater suffering?

The abstract reasons for which a human being creates the death of their fellow, with the stroke of a pen, are far from the reality that is brought into being by the act of ending a life. In the case of the death penalty, the suffering created extends past the bounds of the logic that dictated it (i.e., retributive justice), past the offender, to the friends and family of the condemned: 'the relatives of the condemned man then discover an excess of suffering that punishes them beyond all justice' (p. 156). Camus (2006) stressed the importance of understanding the reality we create beyond the bounds of the imagined reality we think we are creating. For just 'as we now love one another by telephone and

work not on matter but on machines, we kill and are killed nowadays by proxy. What is gained in cleanliness is lost in understanding' (p. 260).

It is easy for us to judge based on abstract concepts before we have experienced the reality that our judgement helps to create. If we do not have to witness or directly bear the consequences, then the judgement is without the feeling that such a reality could stir, and in the case of the death sentence, without an understanding of the horror of the created reality. Camus (1963) argues that far from having the effect that the initial reasons for the instantiation of the death penalty should dictate, according to the logic of those who advocate it—one of fear of death as a deterrent to murder—witnessing death (or rather institutionalised murder) in such a way only serves to increase the desire to murder in those already so inclined and to make nauseous those who are not. As he put it, somewhat sarcastically, we can

> follow the exemplary effects of such ceremonies on public opinion, the manifestations of sadism they arouse, the hideous vainglory they excite in certain criminals. No nobility in the vicinity of the gallows, but disgust, contempt, or the vilest indulgence of the senses. These effects are well known.
>
> (p. 148)

Camus cites a lack of awareness of the human impulse towards destruction as another fault in the proponent's reasoning; the threat of death is no threat to one who seeks it. This is yet another reason we are far from being logically able to claim capital punishments exemplary status, as those who defend its use wish to. The result of which we do know is that 'the State is consequently led to multiply very real murders in the hope of avoiding a possible murder which, as far as it knows or ever will know, may never be perpetrated' (p. 147). Even if we use the logic of revenge, a murder for a murder, the sum does not add up. For the law 'adds to death a rule, a public premeditation known to the future victim, an organization, in short, which is in itself a source of moral sufferings more terrible than death. Hence there is no equivalence' (p. 151). Such a law strips from the person their humanity, long before it stops their breath.

Camus also writes of society's part in the creation of its criminals, extending the chain of reasoning beyond the simple facts of who did what, to the wider structural influences that lead to the crime being committed and thereby contributing to a much older social critique: 'I shall not repeat the arguments that all sorts of thinkers have brought forth since the eighteenth century. They can be summed up anyway by saying that every society has the criminals it deserves' (p. 157). One such historical argument was made by Thomas More (1684), who linked the need for punishment to a lack of alternative education, by asking the following question:

> [I]f you suffer your people to be ill-educated, and their manners to be corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to

which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded
from this, but that you first make thieves and then punish them?

(p. 25)

Camus' critique of the death penalty shows that the outcomes conceived of and
used as justification for the action are absurd when compared to the actual out-
come. As Camus (1977b) pointed out, 'there are crimes of passion and crimes
of logic' (p. 11). Often those who find themselves on the sharp edge of the guil-
lotine blade have committed crimes of passion, whereas those who put them
there, the judges, he thought were guilty of crimes of logic or reason. Philo-
sophical suicide is apparent in the illogical leap out of the uncertainty of the
absurd and into the fixed states of hope and despair, but it is also present in the
*certainty* of judgement that precedes crimes of logic. It is the logic of those who
wield the pen that orders the sword, or the guillotine, that Camus is concerned
with, the logic that justifies death and suffering as means to reasoned ends.

It should be noted that Camus does not seek to destroy all reason, but that
he seeks to return it to the limited realm of the embedded human. To become
lucid is to maintain an awareness of the absurd, which means recognising the
limits of reason. Such recognition, however, does not mean that reason is
useless or non-existent. As Camus (1977a) put it, 'if I recognize the limits of
the reason, I do not therefore negate it' (p. 42). This too would be an illogi-
cal leap. Just like the absence of ultimate meaning to life does not necessarily
negate life, the absence of ultimate reason does not necessarily negate all rea-
son. The method Camus sought was the one that would create a path between
'the opposite paths of humiliated reason and triumphal reason' (p. 48), that is,
an absurd reasoning. The absurd reduces reason to the human, and in so
doing becomes again 'an instrument of thought and not thought itself'
(p. 49). A limit needs to be established, not an absolute limit, but one that
holds philosophical suicide at bay. The Ancient Greeks, Camus thinks, had
such a limit because for centuries they 'questioned themselves as to what is
just, [and] could understand nothing of our idea of justice. For them equity
implied a limit, whereas our whole continent is convulsed in its search for a
justice that must be total' (p. 168).

In the absence of ultimate reason, Camus (1977b) could be said to *reason
from the breath*. With each breath he understands that his life is valuable, at
least to him. Casting his thoughts outward, he understands that when others
also breathe, their lives are valuable to them. In other words, he founds his
sense of value on that which he deems most fundamental and irreducible: life.
In his words:

> [t]he only truth that might seem instructive to him is not formal: it
> comes to life and unfolds in men. The absurd mind cannot so much
> expect ethical rules at the end of its reasoning as, rather, illustrations and
> the breath of human lives.

(p. 65)

Turning his critique then to the ways in which suffering is hastened upon us, and contra Descartes' dictum of 'I think, therefore I am', he declares 'I rebel, therefore we exist' (p. 28). This is to say, when individually we rebel against suffering in all its forms, collectively we flourish. Awareness of the limits of our life and mortality can lead to a newfound appreciation of life in all its naked glory, stripped bare of delusion and crying out for exploration—for alternative ways of thinking and living. Instead of wishful thinking and escapism in the face of suffering, oppression, and adversity, Camus (1977a) informs us of the philosophical attitude needed to keep our shared struggle for existence in plain sight to effectively revolt against all forms of oppression. As he puts it: 'Having started from an anguished awareness of the inhuman, the meditation on the absurd returns at the end of its itinerary to the very heart of the passionate flames of human revolt' (p. 62).

To follow Camus (1977b) we must resist philosophical suicide and heed his claim that '[a]bsurdist reasoning cannot defend the continued existence of its spokesman and accept the sacrifice of other's lives' (p. 15). He teaches us the intellectual humility that stays one's hand—there is no reasoning that justifies suffering. If it is granted that the ability to recognise and respond to our own suffering and the suffering of others is vital to being human, and that the task of education is human development (which inevitably includes identity formation and nation building, whether explicit or implicit), then lucidity, insofar as it holds promise for the development of such an ability, has the potential to contribute positively to education. The absurd teaches that morality is a human enterprise, a struggle to find meaning in a meaningless world. Even if there were an ultimate morality, we would not have epistemic access to it. For Camus, the existence of suffering constitutes empirical evidence that the world is not inherently just, that it is not inherently good, and that it is not reasonable. At the same time, it is not inherently bad, not inherently unjust, not ultimately nihilistic, to which the existence of the sun, the sea, and the experience of joy and love attest. The world, simply put, does not conform to our notions of reason and, by extension, to our abstract moral concepts such as 'good' and 'justice'.

Teaching a child to navigate through such a world, Denton thinks, requires teaching them moral reasoning; however, he is quick to point out, as Camus did, that not all forms of morality are desirable. As previously noted, Denton's moral individual is moral because, when faced with the absurd, they lucidly live the philosophy of limits. And yet, as it currently stands, moral education is for the most part, uncritically absorbed. Denton (1963) noted that in the USA, due to the separation of church and state, there was a shift in education from a 'religious base to a secular, naturalistic one' (p. 1), including a shift away from religious-based moral education, characterised by the transition 'from an emphasis on values to an emphasis on techniques of teaching Skills' (p. 1), as skills were thought to be value neutral. However, he argues that the push to create a value neutral, skills-based educational system is lost the moment decisions of content and methodology, of what and how we teach, are made, as 'norms constitute the nature of those decisions' (p. 2). As such, skills training

did not replace values education, it made it implicit, unexamined, and unintended, as the transmission of norms, values, and beliefs in the classroom seep in from the social and political environment through classroom teachers and curricula. The overall result is that values are taught, but not well. As it stands, young people are, as Denton says, inducted into a system of ethical decisions that 'have already been made for them. In addition, the teacher is almost invariably concerned, not only with facts, but with goods and preferences and desires and "shoulds" which eventually reveal the kind of Universe the teacher feels ought to be' (p. 4).

Values education becomes the realm of individual teachers in which their beliefs are generationally transmitted uncritically and often unwittingly to their students. To address this problem, Denton argues that education needs a philosophical methodology. To start, he suggests we take note of terms commonly used in the philosophy of education literature to describe values, educational terms like

> moral enterprise, norm-acquisitions, worthy-ends, valuational boldness, the school as an axiological institution, moral behavior—and not be afraid to grapple with the most basic question: In a democratic, pluralistic society what shall be the philosophical ground for these terms? What gives them meaning and substance?'
>
> (p. 5)

In other words, we must rethink values education so as not to wittingly transmit a single uniform Universe to students, but to teach them how to discern between Universes,[4] that is, how to recognise, evaluate, and consciously choose which values to keep and which to discard from their personal Universes or value systems. Not in a haphazard or biased way, but in a way that integrates what we know collectively about the world with thoughtful action. This is a task for which Denton employs Camus' philosophy.

Further, Denton points out that as education is involved with the development of humans, and that emotion is part of being human, it 'is committed, therefore, by the nature of this involvement, to concerning itself with the problem of feeling and its relation to knowledge and knowing' (p. 125). Any methodology, then, must demonstrate 'the necessary relationship between feeling and cognition' (p. 127). I concur with Denton that, on this count, Camus' philosophy 'holds considerable promise for philosophy of education' (p. 127). To this end, in Chapter 7, I argue for an adaptation of the concepts of lucidity and philosophical suicide to pedagogy. To be lucid implies being critically engaged, not only cognitively but also emotionally.

## Conclusion

Camus's philosophy can provide important insights for philosophy of education, specifically for pedagogy and curriculum design. Regarding pedagogy, he

provides a method, characterised by the absurd as lucid reasoning noting its limits, that can inform inquiry-based pedagogies, especially those that incorporate philosophical discussion and critical discourse. Regarding curriculum, as it is organised around subjects or learning areas comprising subject clusters, all of which are founded on disciplinary knowledge, it is crucial that teachers are aware of how knowledge is constructed. Camus can provide insights on how to approach truth claims and to problematise the curriculum. How these insights can inform classroom practice will be investigated further in subsequent chapters, but in conclusion I highlight some of the educational implications of promoting lucidity in education.

A fruitful adaption of Camus' thought to education comes from his method of lucidity, which can provide a pedagogical strategy for the development of both teachers and students capacities for absurd reasoning. Camus also teaches us that some philosophies are fatal, and of those that are, philosophical suicide is to be found at their source. This insight is crucial for scholars writing in the field of philosophy of education, and for educators who adapt these philosophies to education policy, curriculum design, and pedagogy. It is essential for education not only to resist epistemically harmful practices but to actively teach students how to do so themselves. Philosophical suicide is the moment when reasoning turns away from possibilities for the expansion and support of life, and towards possibilities that destroy life or the conditions that support it. While all life, including human life, is dependent on the environment, human life is particularly complex in that it is dependent not only on the biological needs of the species but also on the intellectual conditions imposed by societies—the systems created by countless humans over time. When we can think into existence supposedly superior social and political systems that paradoxically threaten our very existence as a species, then it is time to develop different ways of thinking and living.

The absurd helps us to understand that there is, as Paulo Freire (2009) points out, 'a dynamic movement between thought, language, and reality that, if well understood, results in a greater creative capacity' (p. 3), what, I think, Camus would call lucidity. Teachers who incorporate lucidity into their practices and methods of teaching recognise the danger of philosophical suicide—the danger in trying to make the world conform—and in response can cultivate an awareness of their own universes, their own values, to avoid unwittingly transmitting them to others. A lucid inquiry, then, is one in which the teacher is not the repository of knowledge, but a facilitator and co-inquirer, one who is willing and able to question values, both their own and those found in the classroom environment, including the curricular materials and other teaching resources, and, thus, is actively engaged in mitigating the problem of the hidden curriculum. In doing so, the teacher strives to create, not a world that is fixed and final but one that is historically constructed and, thus, open to reconstruction.

In the next chapter, I broaden my approach by turning to the work of Plumwood, and her use of the concept of the logic of domination, to examine

the ways in which philosophical suicide is enmeshed in liberal democracy. To address the problems that Plumwood identifies, in subsequent chapters, I will argue that the pedagogy of the community of inquiry, which aims at fostering philosophical discussion and critical discourse, can be adapted to accommodate Camus' philosophical concerns towards the education of lucid individuals.

## Notes

1  Bertrand Russell (1997) wrote: 'Religion is based, I think, primarily and mainly upon fear' (p. 48). Terror Management Theory (TMT) has been the focus of much research, it 'posits that the fear of death motivates individuals to sustain faith in a cultural belief system or worldview that makes life seem meaningful and sustain the belief that they are significant and capable of enduring beyond their own death' (Greenberg, 2007, p. 593).
2  The expression 'to commit suicide' is tied to suicide's historical illegality. In Australia for example, suicide and attempted suicide have been decriminalised. Although it is still a serious offence to assist in a suicide or suicide attempt (albeit prosecutions have been rare), as of May 2022 all six states, but not the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), have passed legislation creating a physician-assisted suicide (voluntary assisted dying) scheme for eligible individuals. However, in many other countries suicide is still a crime.
3  Camus (1977a) states that '[i]t is clear in this way that I am defining a method [. . .] The method defined here acknowledges the feeling that all true knowledge is impossible' (p. 18).
4  Camus (1977a) talks of the importance of Universes: 'Great feelings take with them their own universe, splendid or abject. They light up with their passion an exclusive world in which they recognize their climate. There is a universe of jealousy, of ambition, of selfishness, or of generosity. A universe in other words, a metaphysic and an attitude of mind. What is true of already specialized feelings will be even more so of emotions basically as indeterminate, simultaneously as vague and as "definite," as remote and as "present" as those furnished us by beauty or aroused by absurdity' (p. 17).

# 2 Economic rationality and ecological failure

## Introduction

Climate change is, in many ways, a spectre too vast to be seen or fully experienced. As a result, our cognitive awareness of this global phenomenon is abstract, although we may experience certain symptoms of climate transformation. This experiential gap can lead to philosophical suicide, allowing space for denial and time for distractions that postpone action, by shifting our focus from the feeling of existential dread that the danger of climate change properly understood could provoke. The existence of the absurd means we can jump out of it and into any comfortable conclusion we wish; the temptation to commit philosophical suicide is given by the uncomfortable thought of our morality in the face of danger. We may not want to face the growing consensus of the scientific community or the implications of their findings regarding our ever-increasing consumption on a finite planet which we rely on for our very survival, and, hence, we may desire to leap into hope or despair. But by turning away from such knowledge, instead of heeding the calls for action, for change, we commit philosophical suicide by for example, hoping for alternative explanations, sticking our head in the sand, appealing to technology or a higher authority to save us. Plumwood (2002) likens the ecological crises we face to the story of the Titanic:

> [W]e have reached the stage in the narrative where we have received the iceberg warning, and have made the remarkable decision to double the engine speed to Full Speed Ahead and go below to get a good night's rest. A change of course might be bad for business, we might have to slow down, lose time. Nothing, not even the ultimate risk of the death of nature, can be allowed to hold back the triumphant progress of the ship of rational fools.
>
> (p. 1)

Why have many of us, our politicians included, in the face of the spectre of climate change, decided to 'go below to get a good night's rest'? This question will frame the chapter, and Plumwood's philosophy will be our guide.

Plumwood points out that if we consider the damage done to the environment, to our life support system, what we think of as rational, in the past and the present, is, to a large extent, irrational. Our systems of human organisation and socio-political ordering, including institutional policies and practices, are ecologically irrational as they are implicated in the creation of the environmental crisis and therefore, are not capable of responding it. These systems, and the 'rationality' accompanying them, must change, as 'no culture which sets in motion massive processes of biospheric degradation which it has normalised, and which it cannot respond to or correct can hope to survive for very long' (p. 1). Education can perpetuate or mitigate this normalisation which is an obstacle to institutional correction. A deciding factor on how well education either perpetuates or mitigates the normalisation of ecologically destructive ideas, beliefs, behaviours, and habits is an understanding of the ways in which our political systems and social institutions are failing ecology. The following analogy by Plumwood sets us on the trail to discovering the ways in which our societal structures are propelling environmental degradation and injustice, and in so doing, illuminates areas in need of rethinking.

> But in the real ecological world on which we are passengers, unlike the Titanic, the millionaires don't go down with the ship, and it's certainly not women and children first. So to understand fully the irrationality of the kind of decision-making that guides our collective course, we must look carefully at where the decisions come from and at the class composition of the passenger lists, at who will perish and who will thrive, and at who is in a position to make good decisions. Above all we need to look self-critically at why bad decisions are made, and under what dominant illusions.
>
> (p. 2)

Fricker (2013), recall, tells us that if we want to understand the conditions of any positive social value, it would be 'instructive to look first at the various ways in which it is likely to fail' (p. 1318). The value I am here interested in preserving is environmental or ecological rationality, which is vital for an effective education as *environmental rationality is integral to education's task of identity formation*. Just as Camus (1977a) examined the logic of suicide and found philosophical suicide to be the epistemic leap proceeding the act, Plumwood (2002) looked to the logic of domination, 'a hubristic and sado-dispassionate form of economic and scientific reason' (p. 2), and found at the root, human exceptionalism, which 'foster[s] illusions of invincibility and hide[s] our real danger' (p. 3). Where Camus finds illusions of certainty, Plumwood finds illusions of invincibility, of human superiority. It seems to me that both are expressing different ways of looking at the same problem; both are concerned with the illusions philosophical suicide creates. Their conclusions can be instructive in helping us 'oust the mad captain, get out the maps and begin to chart a new course' (p. 3). For Plumwood, part of getting out the maps is tracing the historical use of

the term 'human', specifically its use in a traditional Western form of dominant rationality that fails to acknowledge dependency on the Other and on nature. It is the 'human' dominance of the latter (nature) that has sown the seeds for the systematic, ecological failures we are now facing. The failure to acknowledge our dependency stems from the identification of the fully human with reason defined as the opposite of nature; those close to nature are then made to share in its instrumental status. When we think of something as instrumental, we fail to see it as an end in itself, but rather see it only as a means to our ends.

To uncover prejudices stemming from anthropocentric thinking, this chapter combines Plumwood's critique of liberal democracy with the environmental humanities. But first, I will draw on her experience with a crocodile to illustrate how the myth of human superiority blinds us to ecological risk. I follow on with her critique of Plato's metaphysics as an example of a philosophy which creates a split or stark separation between knowledge and the earth, a split that she argues is largely responsible for the 'war on nature'. The logic of domination, which underpins many of the daily habits that cumulatively and collectively destroy the environment, stems from this split and, resultingly, a failure to acknowledge our human 'being' as a part of 'nature'. I also emphasise the animal in human animal to reinstate humans as part of nature before giving an historical overview of the development of climate change literature, which demonstrates both a growing awareness of the damage we are inflicting on our environment and the need to change. I then cover a range of proposed solutions to the problem of climate change and find that they all have underlying attitudes which are problematic in one way or another. In the final section, I argue that liberal democracy is implicated in contributing to our inability to respond to the environmental crises, which undeniably has implications for education, including through a focus on liberal individualism as the dominant ideology in identity formation.

## Plumwood's crocodile: a lesson in nature

Few have experienced a crocodile's death roll and lived to tell the tale. Even fewer have recognised and explored the resultant discrepancy between their experience and their own privileged conception of how the world does and should operate, as Plumwood did.

> Before the encounter, it was as if I saw the whole universe as framed by my own narrative, as though the two were joined perfectly and seamlessly together. As my own narrative and the larger story were ripped apart, I glimpsed a shockingly indifferent world in which I had no more significance than any other edible being.
>
> (Plumwood, 1999, p. 91)

The crocodile's intent to consume her became shockingly, story-shatteringly clear, as she felt its teeth pierce her flesh; to the crocodile she was meat and

nothing other than meat. Incredibly, her experience highlighted a much larger problem, a problem that extended beyond the life or death of one woman, to the problem of *human exceptionalism* or *anthropocentrism*. It was a problem she recognised herself to be susceptible to the moment she recognised the crocodile as predator, and herself as prey.

> Until that moment, I knew that I was food in the same remote, abstract way that I knew I was animal, was mortal. In the moment of truth, abstract knowledge becomes concrete. You gaze with dumb astonishment as your own death, known only as a shadowy, distant stranger, suddenly rises up right before you in terrifying, technicoloured detail and gasp in disbelief that some powerful creature can ignore your *special status* and try to eat you. How had I come to make this terrible mistake about myself, my place, my body?
>
> (Plumwood, 2012, pp. 10–11, *italics* added)

We all live confined within our narratives, our own stories of the world constructed around our experiences. Plumwood's experience with the crocodile crumbled her narratives of safety and invincibility; no longer could she see herself as superior to the crocodile or as separate from its jaws. All the values and meanings she had built up over a lifetime were in an instant trumped by the survival value her flesh held for the hungry crocodile. In that moment, her abstract knowledge became concrete experience, and she recognised the disconnect between the story she had long held to be true, the story that told her she was more than a meal, and the world's indifference to her survival. It could be said that she recognised *the absurd*. At first, the abstract narrative of superiority she initially laboured under fought against her recognition of the crocodile's intent and the reality of the situation, delaying her reaction and, thereby, hampering her chances of survival. Only when she felt herself in the crocodile's jaws did the boundaries between self and all existence—the narratives that sheltered her from the concrete knowledge of her mortality, the ultimate end to her personal stories—fall away. This experience helped Plumwood to become critical of the belief in human superiority over the natural world and allowed her to see the often hidden or denied narratives that drive the belief.

At the time of her attack, Plumwood was already a prolific philosopher working in a diverse range of areas, although she considered herself an activist first. She was formerly known as Routley before she divorced Richard Routley, later to be known as Richard Sylvan, and like Plumwood, also a famed Australian philosopher. The two shared a love of both philosophy and the environment. Together they wrote extensively on logic, metaphysics, and environmental ethics. Plumwood and Sylvan

> recognised that the environmental problems that were coming into view at that time were the result not merely of faulty policies and technologies

but of underlying attitudes to the natural world that were built into the very foundations of Western thought. According to the Routleys, these attitudes were the expression of *human chauvinism*, the groundless belief, amounting to nothing more than prejudice, that only human beings mattered, morally speaking; to the extent that anything else mattered at all, according to this attitude, it mattered only because it had some kind of utility for us.

(Mathews, Rigby, & Rose, 2012, p. 1)

After her attack, Plumwood went on alone to develop some of the most influential work in ecofeminism to date. In *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, she critiques the form of rationality that underpins human chauvinism, teasing out the multiple uses of the term rational. The problematic dominant, and ecologically irrational, form of rationality Plumwood (2002) highlights is linked to dualisms 'through the narrative which maps the supremacy of reason onto human supremacy' (p. 4). Plumwood (1993b) takes this point up in relation to Western thought:

Western thought and society has been characterised by a set of interrelated and mutually reinforcing dualisms which permeate culture, forming a fault line which runs through its entire conceptual system. Each of them has crucial connections to other elements, and has a common structure with other members of the set. The interrelationship of the elements of contrasting pairs is determined not in isolation but at least in part by the other members of the set. They should be seen as forming a system, an interlocking structure.

(p. 443)

While not attributable to one philosopher, Plumwood (1990) locates an influential elaboration of dualisms in the thought of Plato, specifically in his theory of Forms (or theory of ideas).[1] Her concern is with Plato's assertion that the non-material, abstract Forms are universal, timeless, and unchanging, the non-physical essence of all things, of which particulars (i.e., individual material and perceptible items) in the physical world are mere imitations. Put another way, the Forms are transcendental and the essential basis of, but separate from, the material world of appearances known to us through sensation. According to Plumwood, by contrasting the Forms with particulars, Plato creates a fundamental dualism, with rationality as the way the mind comes to know the Forms, while the body is defined as part of the material and 'corrupt state of the world of nature' (p. 525). The rationalist tradition that followed Plato incorporated and strengthened the dualism, reaffirming that 'what is to be valued in human character and culture, and in the world generally, is not nature and what links humans to nature, but what is distinct from and sets humans apart from nature, especially rationality' (p. 525). The human body being part of nature and the soul part of the higher realm of the Forms constitutes a

philosophy that advocates the release of the soul from the body and from the earth; a philosophy that privileges the immaterial over the physical. Death is, as Plumwood says, 'the goal of the philosopher because it is the final and most complete attainment of these goals of separation and denial of dependency' (p. 92).

This traditional Western conception of rationality plays a key role in the justification of the maltreatment visited upon those it relies on and simultaneously excludes from the realm of reason and the category of fully human. These exclusions amount to a denial of humanity, which Plumwood (1993a) argues results in the creation of a class of 'Others'; humans grouped as non-humans, lumped with other non-human animal species and nature to 'naturalise domination' (p. 54). The naturalisation of domination is implicit in most appeals to nature. Under this framework of reason nature 'can be thought of as a sphere of multiple exclusions of various areas of difference marginalised as other' (p. 445). Traditionally, predominantly women and minority groups have been placed in this category. Such a framework is an ecologically irrational manipulation of reason for the purpose of control. Consider the following by Marilyn Frye:

> For efficient subordination, what's wanted is that the structure not only not appear to be a cultural artifact kept in place by human decision or custom, but that it appear *natural*—that it appear to be a quite direct consequence of the facts about the beast which are beyond the scope of human manipulation or revision. It must seem natural that individuals of the one category are dominated by individuals of the other and that as groups, the one dominates the other.
>
> (Frye, 1983, as cited in Plumwood, 1993b, p. 436)

Plumwood argues that ancient dualisms, such as reason/nature, act as cultural artefacts, paving the way for the introduction of others, 'male/female, mental/manual (mind/body), civilised/primitive' (p. 443), and the list goes on. While she locates a major point of development for such dualisms in Plato's writings, she also takes note of Pythagoras' early set of contrasts, depicted in his comment that '[t]here is a good principle, which has created order, light and man; and a bad principle, which has created chaos, darkness, and woman' (Pythagoras, as cited in Plumwood, 1993b, p. 444).

It must be noted that Plumwood (2002), like Camus, was careful not to condemn all forms of reason. Instead, she says that 'we would not need to deliver the sweeping and pessimistic judgement that reason itself is dysfunctional if we recognised reason as plural and understood its political character as part of its social context' (p. 5). A complex understanding of reason needs to consider culture as having a role in perpetuating and maintaining domination to move the narrative away from the naturalisation of domination. Plumwood's idea of the logic of domination does just that, enabling an understanding of the epistemic dimension to our current 'ecological and

ethical failures' which are occurring on such an enormous scale that we 'must change this culture or face extinction' (p. 5). Changing this culture, however, is no easy task. Humans are embedded in culture, and we become unwittingly a part of it, and, therefore, we can too often fail to recognise our own prejudices, those beliefs that contribute to our present environmental crisis. As Plumwood's (1999) encounter with the crocodile revealed, it is possible not only for individuals but also groups, or even '*whole cultures* that subscribe to a particular dominant *story*' to be '*systematically wrong* about quite simple and basic things—our relationship to food, to one another, the intertwining of life and death, the fleshly, embodied character of human existence—and be quite *unaware* of it' (pp. 12–13, *italics* added). In other words, if we are ignorant of our limits, we are in danger of transgressing them.

Plumwood (1990) thought Plato to be one of the most influential Western philosophers, insofar as his elaborations of the reason/nature dualism are far reaching. In the next section I will, therefore, look to *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo* for evidence of the stark separation he created.

## The split that felled nature

Before I begin, it should be noted that my argument for an eco-rational education does not rely on any claim that the cause of the reason/nature dualism can be traced to Plato, nor do I claim that this portrayal of Plato is uncontentious. Rather, it is to illustrate a particular kind of rationality that has, by and large, permeated the Western tradition of philosophy and has become a dominant logic in Western socio-political discourse, charaterised by an appeal to a transcendental epistemology, also referred to by Plumwood as 'heavenism', the view that there is a conceptual split between the ultimate reality of the spiritual realm (immaterial soul/human mind) and the world of appearances or the physical realm (material body/nature), a hyper-separation where reason and emotions are constructed as antagonists, which, she argues, has ontological ramifications that manifest in many of the social and political institutions and systems that shape our world. I will elaborate on this further in Chapter 4.

I should also note that Plato's dialogues can be divided into his early, middle, and late periods. In the early period, Plato portrays the historical Socrates in a series of short ethical dialogues that bear little resemblance to the metaphysical and epistemological doctrines of his middle period, as evidenced by his *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo*. In these, Plato begins to advance ideas that were, arguably, his own creation, rather than following the words of Socrates. In the middle period he no longer restricted himself to moral philosophy and placed the theory of Forms at the centre of his philosophy. In doing so, he asks us to tentatively accept a radical new conception of ourselves and our world, as two worlds, the transcendental world of the Forms and the world of appearances, and to navigate the latter by the former, just as early sailors navigated by the stars.

In the early dialogues, Plato described Socrates as a gadfly who acts as an uncomfortable goad to Athenian politics. The emphasis is on the Socratic

method or dialectic, which is portrayed in the way 'Socrates punctured the pretensions of his interlocutors and forced them to realize that they are unable to offer satisfactory definitions of the ethical terms they used, or satisfactory arguments for their moral beliefs' (Kraut, 2017, n.p.). It is this element, as we will see in Chapter 6, that provides the pedagogical framework for practice and part of the educational merit of the community of inquiry, which is central to Philosophy for Children; a teaching methodology in the tradition of reflective education focused on the development of good thinking and its improvement. It is a tradition in which not Plato, but 'Socrates, most famously, stands at the beginning' and more recently 'it was Dewey who carried the torch' (Cam, 2008, p. 163).

The character of Socrates, as portrayed by Plato (1999a) in the *Phaedrus*, is fond of splits, or *divisions* as he calls them. He says: 'I am myself a great lover of these processes of division and generalization; they help me to speak and to think' (p. 196). No doubt, divisions help us to describe and cognise the world, to order our experiences, and to communicate them to others. The trouble comes when we faithfully believe in them without question, when, as part of our description of the world, we write them into being, transforming them into political systems, social structures such as class and the nuclear family, social institutions such as law and education, and cultural practices without recourse to redefinition or reconstruction when problems arise. Even when we have ample feedback that these systems are no longer viable, we persist in strengthening and renewing them anyway, and bolstered by our unshakable beliefs, we commit philosophical suicide.

Plato deemed the soul to be prophetic, the essence of a person, pure, 'and not yet enshrined in that living tomb which we carry about, now that we are imprisoned in the body, like an oyster in his shell' (p. 153). He splits humans into body and soul and using the allegory of the chariot he splits the soul into three parts: two winged horses and a charioteer of the gods (p. 143). One horse is described as white, beautiful, and easy to command, the other, dark with blood shot-eyes and unruly. The dark horse must be forced to submit by the charioteer, who

> drags the bit out of the teeth of the wild steed and covers his abusive tongue and jaws with blood, and forces his legs and haunches to the ground and punishes him sorely. And when this has happened several times and the villain has ceased from his wanton way, he is tamed and humbled, and follows the will of the charioteer, and when he sees the beautiful one he is ready to die of fear.
>
> (p. 164)

The dark horse must be controlled in order to follow the gods. Those who cannot control the 'ignoble breed' lose their wings (the corporeal element akin to the divine) and fall to earth.

So, in Plato's metaphysics, being human is defined in opposition to nature, creating a human/nature binary or dualism. Accordingly, to be human is to

dominate or control nature, including human nature (e.g., reason over emotions, mind over body). The philosopher holds pride of place in the hierarchy of the corrupt because of the philosopher's ability to recollect what the soul once grasped of the Forms when it was disembodied prior to the birth of its possessor. Plato calls this the higher plane of truth or existence, described as the divine and perfect mystery to which the soul was once exposed when it followed Zeus in the heavens, before it became corrupted, lost its wings, fell to earth, and became mortal (pp. 146–148). For when gods 'stand upon the outside of heaven' (p. 146), they witness 'the very being with which true knowledge is concerned; the colourless, formless, intangible essence, visible only to mind, the pilot of the soul' (p. 146). The story continues, immortality is corrupted by mortality, a succession of lives ensues, during which the soul strives to gain access once again to the realm of the gods and the intangible essence of true knowledge. In Plato's words:

> The soul of a man may pass into the life of a beast, or from the beast return again into the man. But the soul which has never seen the truth will not pass into the human form. For a man must have intelligence of universals, and be able to proceed from the many particulars of sense to one conception of reason; this is the recollection of those things which our soul once saw while following God.
>
> (pp. 150–151)

On this account, the ability to reason from particulars to universals is quite literally the criterion for being human. For those charioteers not strong enough to guide their steeds to the truth, upon losing their wings and falling to earth, they find themselves denied human form. One who glimpses truth just enough to gain human form, but not long enough to remember and recognise it on earth, acts like a beast 'and is not afraid or ashamed of pursuing pleasure in violation of nature' (p. 155). The latter for Plato are the demos, the people, the mob, who have no appreciation of the wisdom of philosophers.

In the *Phaedo*, Plato (1999b) reiterates the philosopher's claim to knowledge and makes the study of philosophy a prerequisite for being in the company of the gods (p. 166). Hence, we find in the words of the character of Socrates, and by extension in Plato's ideas, a form of 'heavenism', an instantiation of true knowledge far away from that of earthly knowledge.[2]

> For there is no light of justice or temperance or any of the higher ideas which are precious to souls in the earthly copies of them: they are seen through a glass dimly; and there are few who, going to the images, behold in them the realities, and these only with difficulty. There was a time when with the rest of the happy band they saw beauty shining in brightness,—we philosophers following in the train of Zeus, others in company with other gods; and then we beheld the beatific vision and were initiated into a mystery which may be truly called most blessed,

celebrated by us in our state of innocence, before we had any experience of evils to come, when we were admitted to the sight of apparitions innocent and simple and calm and happy.

(p. 153)

In Plato, we see a resounding split between the heavens and the earth, between the good and the bad, the innocent and the evil, the perfect and the imperfect (i.e., corrupted), the mortal and the immortal, gods and men, and men and animals. The dualisms are infused with hierarchy, the superior and the inferior, the navigation of which he believes defines human life. And as history has shown, he has had a lasting influence on those who came after him. Thus, in the next section, my aim is to reinstate the human as part of nature, not separate from it.

## Nature reinstated

The terms 'human' and 'nature', when thought of dualistically, are problematic. We humans are of this planet; we depend on it for our survival, we are born on it, and we are destined to die on it. Even the artificial, which we tend to think of in stark opposition to the natural, likewise exists on this planet, is made from this planet, and created by human hands, but if we deny that humans are separate from nature, then human creations also become natural. As Freya Mathews (1999) aptly puts it:

> What environmentalists in fact usually seem to have in mind, in their references to nature, is parts or aspects of the world which have not been created or unduly modified by human agency. Is this a tenable environmental definition of nature? Implied in the definition is a distinction between the artefactual and the natural. I however, like many others, would immediately question the validity of defining the natural in contrast to the artefactual in this way, on the grounds that, since human beings, as biological organisms, surely belong to nature, and since making things comes to us as naturally as eating and drinking do, our handiwork itself has as much a claim to be considered part of nature as the handiwork of spiders, insects and marine life does (Mathews, 1996). Therefore to regard trees and rocks and animals, not to mention webs, hives, termite mounds and coral reefs, as falling within nature, and cars and ships and computers as falling outside it, is to over-simplify the issue.

(p. 120)

Humans, too, are natural. True, we have influenced our own evolution with our own creations over the centuries, but we are still biological creatures. We became human through the same evolutionary processes that shaped the rest of life on this planet; we are animals. The following quote, by Thomas

Suddendorf (2013), positions beautifully humans as organisms in a shared world and demonstrates the prevalence of the belief in human exceptionalism.

> Biology puts beyond doubt that you are an *organism*. Like all organisms, humans metabolize and reproduce. Your genome uses the same dictionary as a tulip and overlaps considerably with the genetic makeup of yeast, bananas, and mice. You are an *animal*. Like all animals, you have to eat other organisms—whether plant, fungus, or animal—for sustenance. You tend to approach things you want to eat while avoiding things that want to eat you, just as spiders do. You are a vertebrate. Like all vertebrates, your body has a spinal cord that leads up to the brain. Your skeleton is based on the same blueprint—four limbs and five digits—as that of a crocodile. You are a mammal. Like all placental mammals, you grew inside your mother and after birth received her milk (or someone else's). Your body features the same terminal hair as a poodle. You are a primate. Like other primates, you have an immensely useful opposable thumb. Your view of the world is based on the same color vision as that of a baboon. You are a hominid. Like all hominids, you have shoulders that allow your arms to fully rotate. Your closest living animal relative is a chimpanzee. Yet it would be prudent of me to call you an ape only from a safe distance. Humans tend to think of themselves as better than, or at least separate from, all other species on this planet. But every species is unique, and in that sense humans are no different.
>
> (p. 2)

Humans are a unique species, but not so unique as Plato envisioned. We now know enough to have no need to create a hierarchy of corruption among species as he did, yet the problem of human exceptionalism or anthropocentrism, as Plumwood's experience with the crocodile highlights, persists for most of us to some extent. It is an age-old notion that, as we have seen, can be found in Plato, and has had great effect on our systems of human organisation, including government, education, and religion. Again, I quote Suddendorf:

> We have become so successful that many of us think a god singled our species out to run the world. Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, for example, all share the fundamental belief that a universal god created humanity in his image, that only we are imbued with a soul, and that a glorious afterlife awaits those who follow a set of divine prescriptions. Nonhuman animals in these plots are cast as extras, and humans are given express rights to exploit them.
>
> (p. 3)

This form of anthropocentrism can be found in values education and carries through to notions of progress[3] and hierarchy in popular science, '[p]erhaps because of the search for continuity and links, a picture persists of our

ancestors evolving in a straightforward, single, and direct trajectory, up a stairway to *Homo sapiens.* This was not the case' (p. 11). Suddendorf is eager to point out that we do not carry the distinction of being the only species of humans to have existed, merely the only one to have survived this long: 'Only two thousand generations ago humans still shared this planet with several upright-walking, fire-controlling, tool-manufacturing cousins' (p. 10). Yet, to many, the thought of human extinction is beyond the pale, as many of us are as assured of our superiority as a species and of our existence as Plumwood (2012) was of her superiority over the crocodile; we recognise our own mortality 'only as a shadowy, distant stranger' (pp. 10–11). Climate change is our species' crocodile, and many of us fail to recognise that we are in its jaws.

## A growing awareness of ecological failure

What does it mean to be in the jaws of climate change? To address this question, I provide an overview of the growing philosophical and scientific awareness of ecological failure. However, while various authors have claimed different starting points for research on climate change, determining the correct one is not my task. Instead, I highlight the contention and cover some significant philosophical and scientific shifts in thinking about the climate. I do so to problematise mitigation proposals for climate change that seek sweeping solutions—such as an over-reliance on quick-fix remedies or silver bullet technological strategies—which risk depoliticising and reducing the complexity of the problem with its multiple and interrelated causes and impacts. If climate change is, as Plumwood argues, a structural problem, then no individual solution can be found as it requires far-reaching change in the structure of society, namely, the reconstruction of our social institutions and practices (including the epistemic frameworks on which they are built). Among them is education, which must aim at developing students' capacity for self-correction, necessary for civic engagement and the democratic correction of social and political institutions, otherwise education fails both democracy and ecology (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 63). I will address this in the next section, where I follow Plumwood in criticising liberal democracy's inability for democratic correctiveness, which is crucial for strengthening democracy as a deliberative process for public decision-making, and essential for creating positive environmental change. But first, to an overview of the historical shifts in thinking about nature and climate.

The 1970s represented somewhat of a starting point for environmental consciousness, although if we deem such a consciousness present in thinkers that link rather than separate humans from nature, we can see a litany of writers strewn throughout history who fit the bill. Green Studies has claimed as a starting point for ecocriticism 'Romanticism and its afterlife—with its search for a symbiosis between mind and nature, the human and the non-human' (Coupe, 2000, p. xvii). In Europe, a diverse range of writers have been claimed, in one way or another, by environmental philosophy, including

Theodor W. Adorno, Baruch Spinoza, William Wordsworth, Denis Diderot, Martin Heidegger, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau was one of the early influencers of the Romantic era, an artistic, literary, musical, and intellectual movement which, as Gilbert LaFreniere (1990) notes, 'later became a part of American Transcendentalism' (p. 41). Indeed, in the USA, Rousseau's philosophy 'directly influenced Emerson, [and] at least indirectly influenced Thoreau and John Muir through Wordsworth' (p. 41). Returning to Australia, this awakening of environmental consciousness lead to large scale activism in the 1960s and 1970s as Mathews (2010) reminds us,

> [s]pectacular campaigns were fought for the Great Barrier Reef, the Colong Caves in the Blue Mountains, Fraser Island and Lake Pedder. Meanwhile, along the eastern coast of the continent the native forests, threatened with wholesale wood-chipping by the Forestry Commission were providing a training ground for young environmental activists.
>
> (p. 162)

Among these young environmental activists were Plumwood and Sylvan (then both Routley). Their book, *The Fight for the Forests: The Takeover of Australian Forests for Pines, Wood Chips and Intensive Forestry*, 'set the bar' for environmental philosophy in Australia (p. 2). William Lines (2006) offers an explanation as to why this might be the case:

> No Australian author or authors had ever combined philosophical, demographic, economic, and ecological analysis in one volume as part of one connected argument. The Routleys were unique. They challenged conventional academic boundaries as barriers to understanding and dismissed claims to objectivity as spurious attempts to protect vested interests. They exposed both wood-chipping and plantation forestry as uneconomic, dependent on taxpayer subsidies, and driven largely by a 'rampant development ideology'.
>
> (pp. 144–145)

Together Plumwood and Sylvan turned their well-honed philosophical skills towards the practical application of environmental activism. In turn, the practical application informed their philosophical views as the 'fight for the forests brought to their attention a jumble of unexamined values, [and] assumptions' (Mathews, 2010, p. 162). A jumble Plumwood would spend her career trying to tease appart.

In 1995 Plumwood asked the question: Has Democracy failed ecology? To address her own question, she begins with the following words:

> As we approach the fourth decade of ecological consciousness and scientific concern about the degradation of the earth's life support systems, the evidence is mounting that the unprecedented level of public concern

and activist effort which these decades have seen is not reflected in ade-
quate, effective or stable forms of change at the political level.

(p. 134)

Decades have passed since Plumwood wrote this passage, yet despite ever-
increasing ecological consciousness and scientific concern, these decades have,
again, failed to produce 'adequate, effective or stable forms of change at the
political level', and no doubt many more years will pass before her observation
is no longer relevant, either due to action or the impossibility of it. Thus, her
words are even more urgent now, and grow increasingly urgent daily.

Plumwood's use of the term 'ecological consciousness' is purposeful to
demarcate a shift in thinking necessary to understand and bring about change.
Ecological consciousness permeated the philosophical literature in the 1960s,
pushing into public awareness primarily in the early 1970s. As Plumwood
(1990) put it, 'assumptions about the role of nature remained largely unchal-
lenged in philosophy until the early 1970s, when they began to be brought up
explicitly for questioning and discussion' (p. 526). While I will not be going
into a full historical analysis, there are a few events, commonly cited as contrib-
uting to this increase in environmental awareness, that can be covered. One of
them is visual. On 7 March 1947, people saw the first partial photographs of
Earth ever taken from space. The grainy black and white images were shot by
a camera strapped to a missile at an altitude of over 160 kilometres (100 miles)
above Earth's surface and showed the curvature of the planet, but they were
still far from the first full view of Earth. It was not until the crew of Apollo 17
left Earth headed for the moon, on 7 December 1972, that the entire planet
was photographed for the first time. It is no great stretch to imagine that this
was a momentous occasion, allowing humans for the first time ever to see
where we live contrasted against the vastness of space. This vision of the fini-
tude of Earth came to us 13 years after Earth's population reached three bil-
lion in 1959, and only two short years before it reached four billion in 1974.

Around the same time, the scientific community became increasingly vocal
about the dangers of living on a finite planetary system with an ever-increasing
population and an economic model of unfettered growth.[4] In 1968, Stan-
ford ecologists Paul and Anne Ehrlich largely reinvented[5] this conversation
with their book, *The Population Bomb* (1968), although Anne Ehrlich was not
credited at the time, and often still is not. As the title suggests, the book was
designed to raise environmental awareness, and did so. Their predictions of
worldwide mass famines in the 1970s and 1980s did not eventuate, although
Paul Ehrlich still maintains that the predictions in the book are correct overall
(Carrington, 2018). The most substantial criticisms the book received were for
their proposed solutions to what they argued was a population crisis, especially
their suggestions for a tax on children, the development of mass sterilisation
agents that could be added to the water supply, and research on how to make
first-born children male. These 'solutions' could be viewed as an argument for
what Plumwood called an EcoRepublic, which I will revisit a little later.

Since then, the focus of discourse has shifted to a related but much older topic, that of how we as humans are changing Earth's climate. I say older as records can be found of the observation of events in which small-scale climate changes occurred due to, as it was then speculated, human activities, reaching back to the time of Aristotle's student Theophrastus, who is credited with coining the term 'climate' as we would recognise it today (Boykoff, 2011, p. 6). Theophrastus observed and recorded events such as an increase in frost in an area after a marsh previously occupying the space had been drained, land becoming warmer after the felling of forests, and so on (Neumann, 1985, p. 447).

Fast forward to the early North American colonists who were concerned with the environment and with the climate, as they were determined to make it 'civilised'. Endorsed in 1785 by Thomas Jefferson, the colonists thought that with enough tree clearing, they could make the climate like 'back home' in Britain. In fact,

> [t]hey thought that the trees were responsible for the high humidity, and they attributed disease to the unsuitable climate. The idea that human activity could modify the climate was not a fantasy to them. It was their hope for creating reasonable living conditions.
>
> (Hay, 2016, p. 4)

However, it was reasonable only insofar as it accorded with their conception of reason, which was entirely British. Fast forward again to recent history and we find a different story, or rather a myth, an intentional muddying of the waters surrounding the age-old story of human influence on climate, namely, that 'human activity has no appreciable effect on climate. . . . It appears to have arisen from those interested in maintaining a clear path toward short term profits in the petroleum and coal industries, and it is largely a phenomenon of the USA' (p. 4), although certainly not confined to the USA alone.

Putting this kind of myth making aside for the moment, scientific research on climate has significantly increased the scope of scientific knowledge, although there is some contention over when this body of research began. In 1824, Joseph Fourier wrote a paper that is often credited with introducing the term 'the greenhouse effect', although the choice of this paper is somewhat arbitrary:

> The question of terrestrial temperatures was on Fourier's mind as early as 1807, when he wrote on the unequal heating of the globe. By 1816, he had composed a manuscript of 650 pages on the subject. His magnum opus of 1822 discusses the problem of terrestrial temperatures and the principles governing the temperature of a greenhouse. In his writings, Fourier acknowledged earlier works on heat by John Leslie, Count Rumford, and others. One of the earliest such references was to the work of

Edme Mariotte who wrote in 1681 that although the Sun's light and heat easily passed through glass and other transparent materials, heat from other sources did not.

(Fleming, 1999, p. 73)

Werner Marx et al. (2017) compiled a comprehensive list of publications 'in the context of the history of climate research and the discovery of the greenhouse effect' (p. 336). They draw their analysis back to Edmond Hally's 1686 paper identifying 'solar heating as the cause of atmospheric motions' (p. 342). They also note that in 1861 John Tyndall linked atmospheric gases to radiant heat (p. 349), but, nonetheless, credit the first paper that can be called climate change research to Svante Arrhenius' 1896 paper linking $CO_2$ to the greenhouse effect. Guy Callendar (1938) used the records from globally positioned weather balloons to first connect $CO_2$ with climate warming. He opened his paper with the following passage:

Few of those familiar with the natural heat exchanges of the atmosphere, which go into the making of our climates and weather, would be prepared to admit that the activities of man could have any influence upon phenomena of so vast a scale. In the following paper I hope to show that such influence is not only possible, but is actually occurring at the present time.

(p. 223)

How right he was. In 1988, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) 'to provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts' (n.p.).[6] In the IPCC (2014) report, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability*, the Summary for Policymakers states: 'Human interference with the climate system is occurring, and climate change poses risks for human and natural systems' (p. 3).

Sir John Houghton (2009), the lead editor of the first three IPCC reports, notes in his book, *Global Warming: The Complete Briefing*, that '[h]umans are an important part of the global ecosystem; as the size and scale of human activities continue to escalate, so can the seriousness of the disturbances caused to the overall balances of nature' (p. 240). He went further to outline three main attitudes to the planet that he believed to be 'unbalanced': exploitation, back to nature, and the technical fix. Exploitation is somewhat intuitive, and well covered by Plumwood; we are using the planet's resources in a way that is non-sustainable. Houghton writes:

Great benefits have come to humankind through the use of fossil fuels, minerals and other resources. Yet, much of this exploitation has been

carried out with little or no thought as to whether this use of natural resources has been a responsible one.

(p. 241)

The back to nature attitude could be understood as the advocacy for a return to nature. That is, a return to pre-industrial times, pre-fossil fuels, pre-supermarkets, a simpler more 'natural' time. While this might be a lifestyle choice for some individuals, it is a necessity for most of the world's population living in poorer countries. It is one of the great injustices of climate change that those who produce the least greenhouse gas emissions often endure the worst of the effects, yet most living in wealthier countries who consume vast amounts of Earth's natural resources, well beyond the boundaries of what is sustainable, still refuse to even consider a simpler lifestyle. Houghton provides two main reasons why he thinks a return to nature is an unrealistic solution to the environmental problems. The first is that there are too many people to feed in this way, and, therefore, we would run into famines, such as those predicted in *The Population Bomb* (p. 241). He also notes that abandoning science and technology altogether would require a cessation of human creativity, which he considers impossible: 'Human scientific and technical development cannot be frozen at a given point in history, insisting that no further ideas can be developed' (p. 242). However, the back to nature fix is unnecessarily severe in scope and dismissive of a simpler life. The back to nature fix may well have a part to play in reversing some of humanity's more damaging exploitive attitudes and creating a more ecologically just world. If we continue to travel down the road we are currently on, it may also become a matter of necessity as supply chains fail and food and water shortages increase due to climate change. I will return to this attitude in the next section, as Plumwood also has a few things to say about the problematic framing of the back to nature choice.

The technical fix is the belief that human ingenuity will be able to fix the problems it creates; it is the 'science and technology as savior' attitude, which, according to Camus' philosophy, is a leap into hope. Houghton notes that on 'the surface the "technical fix" route may sound a good way to proceed; it demands little effort and no foresight. It implies that damage can be corrected . . . rather than avoided in the first place' (p. 242). It also brings to mind the old adages 'a stitch in time saves nine' and 'too little too late'. He labels such an attitude as 'arrogant and irresponsible' (p. 243). As the amounts of carbon released now drive climate change far into the future, this can also be seen as unethical in terms of shifting the burden onto future generations. Moreover, it fails to address the environmental injustices amplified by the effects of climate change that are occurring now. Viewing the solution as simply a technological fix limits solutions to the technological realm and discounts the role of sociopolitical organisation in creating the problem. This is not to say that technology has nothing to contribute, only that, like the back to nature fix, it should not be our only recourse to action. In the next section, I address the ecological

failures of liberal democracy and a growing sense of ethical awareness in the literature on climate change.

## Liberal democracy and the EcoRepublic

Plumwood (1995) argues that 'the escalation of the processes responsible for ecological degradation, despite the great citizen effort which has gone into challenging them in democratic polities, therefore represents an alarming failure' (p. 135) of liberal democracy, an authoritarian political system with its 'military systems organised around protecting privilege which control so much of the planet' (p. 136). As a result, liberal democracy fails to protect nature. She does not, however, see democracy *per se* as inherently authoritarian. It is the political and moral philosophy of liberalism inherent in liberal democracy that she finds problematic. Democracy itself, she argues, has the potential to respond to environmental crisis.

> The superiority of democracy to other systems in detecting and responding to ecological problems would seem to lie largely, then, in its capacity for adaptation and correction. So in order to discover why democracy is failing, we must now ask which political features of democracy contribute to and what forms hinder its capacity for correction?
>
> (p. 137)

For Plumwood, a major obstacle that hinders this capacity is radical inequality, which, she claims 'is both itself a hindrance to correctiveness and a key indicator of other hindrances to societal correctiveness' (p. 137). I return to her claims regarding correctiveness in later chapters when I discuss an approach to education which aims at self-correction as a fundamental aspect of inquiring communities.

Like Houghton, Plumwood (2002) is critical of proposed solutions. Her vision of an environmental oligarchy, which she calls the EcoRepublic, can be seen as a response to a purely techno-science fix. She writes: 'Let us imagine a future ecological and global version of Plato's great rationalist utopia, the EcoRepublic' (p. 63). She goes on to envision a dystopic world, with a storyline not unlike recent post-apocalyptic movies, in which the diversity of life has been almost completely diminished. On the ground of ever-increasing environmental degradation and the threat of total species loss, a new world order of the EcoRepublic is established. Following the dictates of scientific reasoning gone mad, its means are justified by its goal, preservation of life at all costs, including, paradoxically, the extinguishing of life. But only a certain subset of life is extinguished, namely, those without the power to defend themselves or improve their position, those the EcoRepublic has previously excluded and deemed non-human according to its prevailing dominant rationality. A notable feature of the EcoRepublic is its 'top-down military style decision-making chain' (p. 63), of self-appointed first world environmental

scientists called 'EcoGuardians' (p. 68); a system designed to allow maximum flexibility with minimal limitations on implementation. According to Plumwood, these EcoGuardians are often 'unable to recognize their own knowledge as politically situated, hence failing to recognize the need to make it socially inclusive . . . and actively engaged with its boundaries and exclusions' (p. 68). The EcoGuardians' detached, privileged position reinforces inegalitarian social structures, in which no political voice is given to those closest to the sources of environmental degradation, and no provision is made for their suggestions to be heard or for their situation to improve in any way. Such a society, like its neoliberal counterpart, perpetuates and maintains radical inequality, and, thus, is a major obstacle to democracy's capacity for adaptation and correction. She concludes that an effective 'ecological rationality' would facilitate a more self-critical science that is aware of and sensitive to its active role within society, rather than detached from it, a position that echoes Dewey's stance on education.

The EcoRepublic thought experiment reiterates Plumwood's (1995) caution that 'it is the privileged members of society who can most easily insulate themselves from . . . environmental degradation' (p. 138). Further, she stresses that 'the most oppressed and dispossessed people in a society are those who are made closest to the condition of nature, who are made to share the same expendable condition as nature' (p. 139). Unfortunately, a prime example of this failure is the treatment of First Nations people in colonial countries, both historically and today, as I will explore in greater detail in the next chapter, again taking Australia as an example. In respect to climate change, Stephen H. Schneider, Armin Rosencranz, and John O. Niles (2002) argue that this inequality plays out on a global scale. The consensus among the scientific community is that the impact of climate change on societies is dependent on their individual adaptive capacities, for example, their capacity to produce resources, technology, and infrastructure in response to climate extremes. Those in poorer countries will, therefore, be less capable of adapting to the effects of climate change, even though they have contributed relatively little to its causes. As a result,

> not only is the climate-policy community faced with the need to estimate the impacts of a wide range of plausible climatic futures, but it must also estimate the relative adaptive capabilities of future societies so as to assess the equity implications of the consequences of slowing global warming. All of this is played out against the historical background of large inequities in access to resources that make it difficult to achieve agreements that protect the global commons.
>
> (p. 41)

A study published in *Nature*, by John Mutter (2010), shows that 'natural disasters', a feature of climate change, disadvantage the already disadvantaged in both the richer industrialised and poorer nations. To show the former, he

cites the gap in the redevelopment of New Orleans five years on from hurricane Katrina. The poorest district 'has about 24% of its former residents, whereas the wealthy Central Business District has seen 157% repopulation' (p. 1042). Job losses were seven times more likely for low-income black workers than higher-income white workers, and 'low-income people have found it more difficult to attain basic living conditions, including good access to health care' (p. 1042). Zooming out from the internal inequality of a richer industrialised nation to that of a poorer nation, the same pattern is evident. Richer nations 'can buffer the effects of terrible natural blows on a national level', but not so for 'small countries with weak economies' (p. 1042). Mutter provides the following examples:

> Samoa's economy was set back 30 years by a series of hurricanes that devastated the entire island; Madagascar is estimated to have lost a decade in its economic development because of similar disasters. The magnitude 8.8 earthquake in Chile in February 2010 released about 500 times as much energy as the 7.0 quake a few weeks earlier in Haiti. Yet the death toll in Haiti—the much poorer nation, with a GDP more than 20 times smaller than that of Chile—was almost 500 times larger, and the nation's prospects for recovery are much worse.
>
> (p. 1042)

Understanding the impacts of climate change on diverse populations is also addressed in the IPCC *Climate Change 2014* report. Chapter 13: 'Livelihoods and Poverty' 'is devoted to exploring poverty in relation to climate change, a novelty in the IPCC' (IPCC, 2014, p. 798). Its addition reflects growing global recognition and concern over the effects of climate change on those already economically and ecologically disadvantaged.

Although poverty levels vary around the world, those in the most disadvantaged positions are the ones most likely to suffer the greatest effects of climate change and other environmental degradation. As a result, they are often the ones in the best position to provide information on ecological issues, as they are often the first to observe them and have the greatest personal interest in preserving the environment in which they are embedded. However, as Plumwood (1995) stresses, they are also the ones most likely to be silenced, and the least likely to be given a voice to influence policy. Hence, she concludes that our political system suffers from a communication problem that makes ecological correction difficult, if not impossible. In this way, environmental injustice goes hand in hand with an embedded human injustice. Ours is an active system of creating and distributing environmental ills, or as Plumwood puts it, 'impoverishment and environmental degradation are produced as twin offspring of the same processes of development' (p. 139). Nature is viewed simply as a backdrop to human activities and a means to our individual liberation. This picture of liberal democracy is not one of a responsive democracy, as it is founded on a conception of society as an aggregate of individuals, mutually

disinterested, with interests of their own choosing, which does not provide the kind of relational correctiveness necessary to mitigate ecological failure. Conceptions of liberty that centre on independence, rather than interdependence, fail to acknowledge the source of their so-called independence, namely, natural resources. Nature is treated as dispensable and replaceable, as are those closest to it, those who live a less consumer-driven, 'back to nature' lifestyle.

> The man of property assumes the contribution of nature in the form of a continuing support base for production, accumulation and renewal, but also denies it, not infrequently in even stronger terms than he denies these human Others, *failing to recognise and allow, in his economic and cultural systems, for nature's reproduction and continuation.*
>
> (p. 149, *italics* added)

Once again this is illustrated in the case of climate change, as Houghton (2009) attests:

> Nature took about a million years to lay down the amount of fossil fuel that we now burn worldwide every year—and in doing so it seems that we are causing rapid change of the Earth's climate. Such a level of exploitation is clearly not in balance, not harmonious and not sustainable.
>
> (p. 242)

The division between humans and nature creates a false sense of control over nature, further driving exploitation of both nature and Other. Plumwood's (2002) example of the fate of a single penguin she discovered washed up dead along a shoreline in Tasmania gives another example of the ways in which 'technoscience has contributed to producing the environmental crisis [when] applying to highly complex situations and systems specialised and highly instrumentally-directed forms of knowledge whose aim is to maximise outputs' (p. 38). Upon initiating investigations into the cause of death, an autopsy revealed the penguin had died of starvation. Plumwood was later to discover that an important food source for penguins and other marine life had fallen victim to reductionist economic rationality. Sometime before the penguin had been discovered, quarantine restrictions in Western Australia were lifted, allowing fish farmers to make the economic decision to import marginally cheaper South African pilchards to feed their fish, rather than continuing to use local stocks. As is often the case with introduced animals, disease spread rapidly to local stocks. Lacking in immunity, millions of wild pilchards died, and the effects were felt throughout the complex food web (p. 14). If the possibility of such an occurrence was taken into consideration, easy enough to do if one consulted the plentiful research on the topic,[7] and the animal lives lost were valued, importing the pilchards would not have been viewed as a logical or ethical option. The environmental irrationality of the situation is apparent if we consider the factors the fish farmers chose to take into consideration

when making the choice of importing food from overseas or using the local stock. In making their decision they privileged economic factors, background-ing environmental consequences and effectively reducing a complex chain of possibly predictable effects down to the economic benefits to themselves. Privileging economic rationality blinded them to the ecological limitations of the situation. An effective ecological rationality, therefore, needs to include the requirement to frame decision-making in ecological as well as economic terms.

While ecologically rational decision-making is important on all levels, including the individual, we must be wary of explanations that seek to place all responsibility for change on the individual alone. The liberal explanation for ecological failure, as Plumwood puts it, 'treats change in liberal terms as a matter of consumer willpower and argues back from the absence of change to the absence of consumer concern' (p. 142). This argument, however, only works on the 'self-defeating assumption that ecologically harmful, self-maximising "consumerist" behaviour is a natural, invariant aspect of "human nature", rather than one itself institutionally constructed and specified as rational within the framework of liberal capitalism' (p. 143).

How many times have we heard someone say: 'that's just x's nature' or 'we can't change that, it's human nature'? The recourse to human nature as explanation naturalises domination, making the problem seem beyond human intervention, as if we should be satisfied with the 'that's just the way it is' explanation. Such an explanation shifts the blame away from the system that creates the behaviour and helps enforce the rigidity of thinking of an existing system as being the only one possible. Sylvan and Plumwood, then Routley and Routley (1982), commented on the relation between theories of society and human nature:

> The question of the character of human interests and preferences and the extent of their determination by the social context in which they occur is fundamental to the whole question of social and economic arrange-ments, and also accordingly to arguments for the State on the basis of human propensities.
>
> (p. 25)

The narrative of the recalcitrant human unwilling to change serves to shift the focus onto individuals and away from groups, governments, and corporations which are the major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. Again, this is not to say that individuals have no responsibility in the matter, as groups, governments, and corporations are made up of individuals. However, the individual trapped in the dualism of personal versus structural responsibility is likely to feel the problem too big to solve and, therefore, hope or despair to be the only rational responses.

Such responses, as we have seen in the previous chapter, are philosophically suicidal as they prevent understanding of the nuanced relationship between the individual, the structural, and the environmental, an understanding needed to

take concerted, informed, and effective action. If the basis of the problem can be obscured by vested interests, then possible solutions are also obscured. Such a narrative is also important in establishing the authority to punish. As Plumwood (2002) says:

> The inevitable outcome of attempting to give priority to saving the conventional identification of liberalism with democracy is to cast the ecological failure of liberalism as a conflict between environment and democracy, and thus ultimately to force a reluctant construction of ecological failure as lending support to authoritarian strategies and regimes oriented to coercion of this recalcitrant 'human nature'.
>
> (p. 143)

Casting human nature as the source of failure can then be used to justify punitive measures against the individual or group of individuals, such as in the example of the EcoRepublic, where the instrumentalisation of the poor by the powerful is dressed in 'organic' clothes, and the narrative of the 'natural' is weaponised.

Alternative theories of society based on competing assumptions of human nature are not new. Rousseau, for example, represents a break in the insistence of many theologians and classical philosophers that nature, or at least human nature, is corrupt. He reversed the Platonic dualism by arguing that both nature and human nature are pure and that it is society that corrupts. He thought that we learn through our flawed society to follow dictates other than those of our conscience. Rousseau (1987) argued that it is a learned response for a human to say to themselves 'at the sight of a man suffering, "Perish if you will—I am safe"' (p. 47). For him, selfishness is not inherent, as it is in liberal discourses, it is learned and must be unlearned through the proper development of reason through education. While rightly criticised by feminists for his lack of attention to female education, his book, *Emile*, nonetheless inspired many educational reformers, such as Johann Pestalozzi, Friedrich Froebel, and A.S. Neill.

A further complication to the development of ecologically rational democratic structures is the denial not only of the Other but of habituation to the effects created by the denial of climate change. Plumwood (1995) notes that 'liberal-democratic political systems are not responding in more than superficial ways to a state of ecological crisis which every day grows more severe but which every day is perceived more and more as normality' (pp. 141–142). According to Schneider et al. (2002), this growing sense of normality is only added to by a media that attempts to portray both sides equally and as adversaries, giving a 'contrarian view publicity vastly disproportionate to its meager support in the community of climate scientists' (p. 41). To counter this, Schneider spent a large proportion of his career committed to educating citizens and policymakers in the basics of climate science, to help them make more informed choices and clear up common misconceptions.

The idea of the need for an informed citizenry is not new; indeed, it has been a goal of education for centuries. At the beginning of the last century, Dewey (1910), who was a famous advocate of education as a social and interactive learning process and, thus, school as a social institution through which social reform can occur, cited the need for educating students in the scientific method to prevent rigidity of mental habits and aid people in understanding a world that is largely being shaped by science in one way or another—for good or ill. He wrote, 'actively to participate in the making of knowledge is the highest prerogative of man and the only warrant of his freedom' (p. 127). But how do we participate in a way that does not reinforce ecologically irrational dualisms?

To this question, Jennifer Bleazby's (2013) research on education offers some insights. By introducing Plumwood to Dewey's thoughts on democracy and education, which she says are 'highly compatible with many contemporary feminist philosophies' (p. 13), Bleazby argues that 'we can more fully explain the epistemological, educational, political and social consequences of these dualisms and develop a method for reconstructing them' (p. 13). I follow Bleazby in using Plumwood and Dewey to argue for the reconstruction of education, towards the development of ecologically rational democratic structures, characterised 'by dialogical relationships in order to set up the logical and cultural basis for negotiation' (Plumwood, 2002, p. 11).

Plumwood (2002) argues that an ideal ecologically rational 'liberal public sphere is taken to represent a deliberative arena where everyone, despite other inequalities, has an equal opportunity to speak' (p. 92). However, under an ecologically irrational liberal democracy there are a great many blocks that prevent those who suffer inequalities from speaking. An ecologically rational democracy, on the other hand, is one that actively works to remove such blocks, and to stop future blocks from accumulating, by restoring the emotional, bodily, and political aspects of reality excluded from the sado-dispassionate model (p. 42). For Plumwood, restoring relationality provides a sound basis for knowledge relationships, as it allows previously backgrounded meanings to emerge as part of epistemic reality. Plumwood, thus, calls for an 'ethico-epistemological proposition [. . .] that knowledges that involve injustice to those who are known do not provide accurate or ethically acceptable forms of knowledge' (p. 44). Her proposition provides an epistemic guide for regulating dominance and can perhaps be used to dismantle dualisms and increase intellectual freedoms, which are 'compromised by the domination of instrumental rationality that sees all as a means to the furtherance of our currently-accepted economic and political structures' (Hyde, 2016, p. 2). This is a topic to which I will return in greater detail in Chapter 7.

## Conclusion

Understanding the ecological crisis in which we find ourselves, so that we can seek ways to mitigate and adapt our behaviour and systems, including developing effective pedagogies to educate towards this goal, requires more than

gathering relevant scientific and historical information. Understanding how the beliefs, attitudes, and habits that shape our personal, social, and political identities translate into ecological impacts is paramount to facilitating change. Ecologically irrational dualisms, founded on a split between humans and nature, have maintained and perpetuated a logic of domination that Plumwood has accused of complicity in the destruction of global ecology.

In later chapters, I argue that schools structured as institutions for the education of democratic citizens are, given Plumwood's assessment of liberal democracy, inherently problematic, especially in addressing the educational task of identity formation. If liberal democracy is unable to respond adequately to climate change, the remit of schools should not be the creation of more liberal individuals, but the development of ecologically aware citizens, stemming from a shift away from the individualism inherent in the logic of liberal identity, a logic that is even more excessive in current neoliberal politics. Such a shift, I contend, can provide the kind of correctiveness Plumwood seeks. But first, in the next chapter, I will examine the 'myth of reversal' as part of the mechanism which perpetuates dominant rationality and, in turn, drives both climate change denial and a denial of prior presences.

## Notes

1 Plumwood (1997) writes that 'Plato may have theoretically elaborated and perfected the emphasis on reason as the representative characteristic of each of the associated elites and nature as that of the lower orders, but in this he clearly drew on a larger socially established framework. I claim to show that reason/nature dualism can be *traced* in Plato's work, not that Plato invented it or is the author of our ecological problems' (p. 150).

2 Plumwood focuses on the dominant transcendentalism, or heavenism, of Christianity that has seeped into contemporary political discourses, to which I will return in greater detail in the next chapter.

3 Similar to growth, progress can be understood in relation to an end goal as it is here, or as a goal in itself as it is in the community of inquiry. That is, the concept of 'progress' has both negative and positive connotations. Its negative association is illustrated best with unsustainable growth or development. For such progress to be positive would require sustainable growth. While there is very little written on it, progress in a community of inquiry refers to philosophical progress or participants' progress with making sense of their world. To this end Clinton Golding (2009) defines philosophical progress as 'the movement from philosophical problems to philosophical resolutions, or in other words, from incongruous and inadequate conceptions to transformed conceptions where the problems no longer occur' (p. 223; see also Golding, 2011). Philosophical progress is also linked to Dewey's idea of growth regarding inquiry (see Chapter 7).

4 Growth is used in this instance to denote economic growth, usually measured by gross domestic product (GDP).

5 I say reinvented as Thomas Malthus' (1798) *An Essay on the Principle of Population* was a well-known precursor.

6 See: www.ipcc.ch/organization/organization.shtml

7 Daniel Gaughan (2001), for instance, argues for 'the need to undertake a review of the current international standards for import risk analysis (IRA)' (p. 113).

# 3 The myth of reversal

## Identity, history, and the colonial imagination

### Introduction

Is it possible that 'we' (colonisers) are involved in a war 'we' do not recognise? If so, is it possible that in this war 'we' are the aggressors, and that 'we' are both the inciters and benefactors of an ongoing violence done to a marginalised Other whom 'we' imagine as less than human? These questions are pertinent in light of the ecological failure of liberal democracy and the attendant social injustice wrought by its institutions; an injustice that is best understood as the ontological instantiation of a dominant rationality, a philosophically suicidal form of reasoning. 'We' denotes a group identity, and as an individual's sense of self is defined by group membership, what defines a group's identity is contentious and, thus, open to critique. As Australian feminist philosopher Genevieve Lloyd (2000) once said, even those people deemed outsiders in other areas, such as feminists in academic philosophy, when it comes to thinking about the land and the complex social and cultural structures in Australia, non-Indigenous people need 'to confront the fact that, whatever their sense of "outsideness" in relation to their own intellectual tradition, they are undeniably "inside" that tradition in relation to indigenous women and men' (p. 30). This understanding of the colonial-self as insider entails a need 'to come to terms also with being, in some sense, responsible for a history that is emerging ever more clearly as a history of dispossession and oppression of the original inhabitants' (p. 30). Enlarging on Lloyd's last claim, I include present and future oppression, for as Wolfe (2006) has said, oppression is an ongoing structure rather than only an historical event.

The structural nature of colonisation means that the 'Australian identity' retains a colonial aspect, and that generally speaking settler colonial people live with prejudice that is largely subconscious, and rarely questioned. For example, it is all too common to hear people opine at the suggestion of the integration of Aboriginal knowledge that 'we can't go back', which I take them to mean back in time to a simpler or 'tribal' life. Note also the parallel to Houghton's dismissal of the back to nature attitude. Such statements reveal a prejudicial notion of Aboriginal knowledge as somehow inferior and stuck in the past along with a fear of a relationship with nature that is not premised

on domination. Historically, the idea of learning from Aboriginal knowledge has hardly been embraced and even now is too often dismissed or met with hesitation or puzzlement. These prejudices govern the limits of colonial lives, enslaving us, even as we enslave others.

The idea that a destructive way of thinking underlies such prejudices has been discussed by a wide variety of thinkers. Plumwood, recall, refers to this way of thinking as a logic of domination, whereas Camus (1977a) appeals to philosophical suicide as the choice that leads us down either of 'the opposite paths of humiliated reason and triumphal reason' (p. 48). Moreton-Robinson (2015) speaks of the concept of possessive logics. While I do not wish to imply that all of these are one and the same, and by doing so collapse any differences, I am suggesting that the different concepts are complementary, and together can increase our understanding of the societal forces at work in creating and maintaining oppressive structures. I do this not to paint the Other as victim or powerless, as Aboriginal peoples in Australia were and are active and successful in many ways at resisting colonisation and mediating their relationships with those outside their communities (Martin, 2008), but to make the case for present-day colonial peoples to reflect on their own involvement in ongoing colonisation and become traitorous to the dominant logic. I will address this further in Chapter 7. But first, to challenge these myths, we need to be able to recognise them, which is the focus of this chapter.

The concept of possessive logics is particularly instructive as a starting point for analysing how patriarchal colonial logic is operationalised. As Moreton-Robinson (2015) points out, 'white possessive logics are operationalized within discourses to circulate sets of meanings about ownership of the nation, as part of common-sense knowledge, decision making, and socially produced conventions' (p. xii). Possessive logics normalise and internalise the violence of colonisation. Hidden in plain sight, so to speak, possessive logics have helped to create and continue to perpetuate colonial culture, inculcating at all levels of social organisation a myth of reversal that casts First Nations peoples along with Indigenous flora and fauna (prior presences) as Other. A myth of reversal is any story that weaponises suffering as a means of dehumanisation, thereby amplifying and assuring the reproduction of suffering. If dominant logics light the fires of colonial violence, myths of reversals are the oxygen needed to keep them burning. It is easy to think in terms of life and death, good and evil, but it is less intuitive to think of violence as a means of transferring the material and epistemic goods necessary for the creation and reproduction of a new social order that benefits some, at the cost of the Other. The epistemic story creates a living ontology, one that is often fed by communal suffering, including the loss of both life and meaning.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) uses the term 'epistemic violence' to mark the silencing of marginalised groups, as a way of tracking the epistemic aspects of colonialisation and the effects of the institutional silencing of knowledge and privileging of certain epistemic practices through dominant colonial discourses. Epistemic violence can be found in speech acts, in systems of rationality, and broadly speaking, in our relationship with others, both human (including our

relationship with ourselves) and non-human. In all cases, epistemic violence comes from the privileging of a single position that inferiorises or nullifies others. It is a forced intellectual conformity to a dominant logic which narrows a person's physical and intellectual horizons. The epistemic violence of colonisation, accompanied by a belief in the inferiority of Other, ensures no contradictory evidence is or can be admitted, thereby perpetuating and maintaining the colonial social institutions and practices on which colonialism relies. In other words, the life of the colony depends on dehumanisation as a justification of its violence. A context reversal, a reversal of the particulars of a situation in which the suffering of the oppressed is claimed to be the suffering of the oppressor, is created to advance the platform of the powerful. Myths of reversal are often used to justify the excesses of history's past which, nonetheless, extend into the present and future. It is not just the story that is reversed, but, typically, also our sense of what is right and wrong. These myths of reversal limit not only the Other but they also limit, although differently, the oppressor's self-identity through the process of internalisation, a process supported by education.

While the death penalty is now abolished in Australia, during settlement, myths of reversal too often resulted in Aboriginal people literally 'hung for the temerity of using their own land' (Plumwood, 2007, p. 63). Many of the same misguided arguments for the use of the death penalty, raised by Camus, were also used in Australia, with one addition. A primary justification for capital punishment was its use as a teaching tool for a people that were thought to be of inferior intellect. Well over '100 Aborigines were judicially executed in the 19th century . . . [hanging] was perceived by colonizers as the ultimate instrument in educating "untutored savages" in the rule of law' (Finnane & McGuire, 2001, p. 281). What they were supposedly being taught was to respect the thieves that stole their land, although this, of course, was never explicitly admitted to. The widespread theft of Aboriginal land has never ceased, and, indeed, as Plumwood (2007) contends, is rarely discussed, but also actively denied; the 'insistence that it is the prior, not the colonizing, presence that is illegitimate, shows that what is involved here is not ignorance but a complex mythologizing of conquest' (p. 63). It is the myth of reversal that keeps the theft alive. Under international law, a country could be settled if it were uninhabited, or *Terra Nullius*, meaning no-one's land. As Aboriginal peoples had already inhabited the continent for tens of thousands of years, claiming Australia to be *Terra Nullius* was a myth used to justify invasion.[1] Lloyd (2000) reminds us that the 'idea of terra nullius allowed thought of the sovereignty of Australia to be organized around reassuring ideas of discovery and settlement, rather than more disturbing notions of invasion and conquest' (pp. 31–32).

## We

Moreton-Robinson (2015) describes another 'we', namely, Aboriginal, Indigenous, and First Nations peoples worldwide. The 'we' to which Moreton-Robinson belongs is the 'we' that 'we' present-day colonial peoples have made

Other. In her words, 'Indigenous peoples have been sociohistorically constructed through first world Western knowledge systems that are ontologically and epistemologically grounded in differentiation' (p. xvii). 'We' as colonial identities fail to recognise the Aboriginal 'we' as prior presences, constructing them as Other, as less than human and often as part of the 'natural' world, cast as irrational, and closer to non-human animals than the so-called 'rational' coloniser. The way 'we' see the Other is inextricably bound with the way 'we' see nature. Too often, like the case of the penguins discussed earlier, the way 'we' see nature is reduced to economic rationality, an instrumental rationality that recognises the world only for the use to which it can be put, a world reduced to tools of progress,[2] with all actions justified accordingly. Plumwood (2007) describes colonisers as 'those who annexed [the land] and instituted "progress" as the work of eliminating everything not seen as of economic or other human use' (p. 63). Tied to economic rationality are the raw materials that can be *liberated* from the earth, those to be farmed, mined, and milled, but also human labour, those who can be coerced or forced to reshape the earth into the coloniser's image, according to the coloniser's will. Behind it all lies 'the driving engine of international market forces' (Wolfe, 2006, p. 394).

To achieve the aims of the market, the colonisers, above all, required land. But they were faced with the problem of how to reconcile English law, which was largely written in service to those who have land, with the taking of land by those who have none and no rightful stake in anyone else's land. Put as a question: How were the colonisers to obtain land already occupied by Aboriginal peoples that they had no claim to under their own English law? Their answer? Legal theft: create a myth of reversal by denying the presence of Aboriginal people, where possible, making them less than human and declaring their land *Terra Nullius*, 'nobody's land'. The result was systemic genocide (Roache-Turner, 2001; Rogers & Bain, 2016; Shipway, 2017; Short, 2010; Tatz, 1991, 2016).

Writing in 1987, Henry Reynolds expressed his surprise at the complexity of the issue of sovereignty in Australia:

> It was only after a great deal of research into the legal aspects of settlement that I began to appreciate the complexity of the issues involved, the ramification, the overlapping. But it gradually became clear that the conventional view was in need of major correction. I realized that I had gone on for years accepting at face value ideas and interpretations that were wrong, that I had taught them over and over to students, never doubting their accuracy. My conviction strengthened as my research progressed and . . . I believed that the conventional view of Australian settlement, seen from both a legal and a historical view, had to be significantly reassessed. This in turn had important implications for the way Australians see their past, the way they assess present problems, the way they plan for the future.
>
> (p. xii)

Colonial history books tell how Captain James Cook 'discovered' Australia in 1770 and laid claim to its Eastern coast in the name of the Crown on 22 August of that year. On 21 April, Cook (2005) committed to his log the following words: 'In the P.M. we saw the smoke of fire in several places; a Certain sign that the Country is inhabited' (p. 897). In the pages that followed, representing the days after the first sighting of smoke, he details his numerous encounters with Aboriginal peoples, including his brief exploration of their civilisation; their huts, the cuts they made in trees, 'steps of about 3 or 4 feet asunder for the conveniency of Climbing them' (p. 917), the mussels boiling over an open fire, which he takes the liberty of tasting after scaring off the owners, the darts he assumes are used for fishing, and the canoes that he sees being used to fish. But none of this mattered to the English.

The myth of discovery was endowed with many positive values, the kind that made for a riveting and acceptable story for the English imaginary at the time, and later for the Australian colonialists. According to Reynolds (1987), these values included 'heroism, endurance and skill' (p. 9). Cook was valorised in newspapers, speeches, statues, and songs, held up as hero by politicians and a model for Australian youth to imitate, and the myth of his grand endeavour was and is taught as history. Unsurprisingly, Baldwin (1985) describes a similar situation in the USA:

> What passes for identity in America is a series of myths about one's heroic ancestors. It's astounding to me, for example, that so many people really appear to believe that the country was founded by a band of heroes who wanted to be free. That happens not to be true. What happened was that some people left Europe because they couldn't stay there any longer and had to go someplace else to make it. That's all. They were hungry, they were poor, they were convicts. Those who were making it in England, for example, did not get on the Mayflower. That's how the country was settled.
>
> (p. 3)

I say unsurprisingly because America shares many similarities regarding colonisation, taking for its justification the same doctrine as Australia does: the doctrine of discovery. To find out what Cook's discovery meant from a colonial legal standpoint, we must turn to the roots of the doctrine of discovery, which stretch back to the fifth century:

> The Roman Catholic Church and various popes began establishing the idea of a worldwide papal jurisdiction that placed responsibility on the Church to work for a universal Christian commonwealth. This papal responsibility, and especially the Crusades to recover the Holy Lands in 1096–1271, led to the idea of justified holy war by Christians against infidels to enforce the Church's vision of truth on all peoples.
>
> (Miller et al., 2010, p. 9)

The Church's vision of *truth on all people* translated in Australia to a *war on all peoples* with different conceptions of truth, different ways of knowing, being, and doing. It was a war of epistemological origin that has left a legacy of epistemic violence, one of the key elements in any process of domination.

Under the doctrine of discovery, Cook's claim of 'first discovery' of Australia effectively prevented other European powers from doing similar; however, according to Reynolds (1987), this form of 'discovery alone did not amount to much' (p. 10), as occupation was required to gain sovereignty. Shedding new light on the historical and legal evidence about the use of the doctrine of discovery, Indigenous legal academics Robert J. Miller et al. (2010) describe how in the 1500s 'Elizabeth I and her advisers added an element to the definition of Discovery that a European country had to actually occupy and possess newly found lands to turn a first discovery claim into a claim of complete title' (p. 7). In the case of Australia, occupation did not occur for 18 years after first discovery, and even then, the 'area claimed could only stretch inland as far as the crest of the watershed of rivers flowing into the ocean on the line of coast actually occupied' (p. 11). The colonisers, therefore, were not acting in accord with international law in declaring ownership over all of Australia, when at the time they only physically occupied a tiny portion, as they did in 1788 (p. 7). How were such claims justified? Land lacking sovereignty or ownership are the two conditions of *Terra Nullius*, neither of which applied in Australia. Yet, *Terra Nullius* has been used as a long-standing reason for occupation. Despite the doctrine being but a small part of the doctrine of discovery, it was a destructive one.

Justifications abounded for what Reynolds (1987) calls a 'land grab' (p. 13); a prominent one being that Aboriginal peoples never owned the land (p. 13). But how could that be? It was obvious from Cook's (2005) first encounters that they used the land:

> On the sand and Mud banks are Oysters, Muscles, Cockles, etc., which I believe are the Chief support of the inhabitants, who go into Shoald Water with their little Canoes and peck them out of the sand and Mud with their hands, and sometimes roast and Eat them in the Canoe, having often a fire for that purpose, as I suppose, for I know no other it can be for. The Natives do not appear to be numerous, neither do they seem to live in large bodies, but dispers'd in small parties along by the Water side. Those I saw were about as tall as Europeans, of a very dark brown Colour, but not black, nor had they woolly, frizled hair, but black and lank like ours. No sort of Cloathing or Ornaments were ever seen by any of us upon any one of them, or in or about any of their Hutts; from which I conclude that they never wear any. Some that we saw had their faces and bodies painted with a sort of White Paint or Pigment. Altho' I have said that shell fish is their Chief support, yet they catch other sorts of fish, some of which we found roasting on the fire the first time we landed; some of these they strike with Gigs,* (* A fishing implement like

a trident.) and others they catch with hook and line; we have seen them strike fish with gigs, and hooks and lines are found in their Hutts.

(pp. 928–929)

*Use* is important, for as Reynolds (1987) explains, *intentionality* played a large role in the international law of the time in establishing ownership; an intention to occupy and use or enjoy the land, even if only intermittently, was all that was required for ownership (p. 15). Certainly, there was ample evidence, as Cook's account suggests, that this requirement was satisfied. Further, there was provision for the recognition of ownership either individually or communally, the communal use of land, still being use. An early text by Christian Wolff goes so far as to say that 'the intention of wandering, which is governed by that intended use, gives sufficient evidence of the occupation of the lands subject to that use, although they have not established a permanent abode on them' (Wolff, as cited in Reynolds, 1987, p. 16). It would have been possible to make a case for Aboriginal sovereignty at the time of colonisation, easy even. Aboriginal peoples had sufficient grounds under international law for their occupation to be recognised had the colonisers (invaders) been so inclined, in which case the history of Australia would have no doubt differed greatly.

Reynolds goes on to recount the sentiment behind the work of Wolff's disciple, Emer de Vattel, a writer, who, over a period of 200 years, has been quoted 'in parliament, from the bench, the pulpit and the rostrum' as providing legal grounds for occupation, but who when read in context, 'provides nothing of the sort' (p. 18). His work was used to fuel the myth of reversal. He does provide support for a shared occupation of sorts, but one that is acceptable only 'if the native were not reduced to want land' (p. 18). In other words, total occupation and establishment of a built environment was impermissible. My use of the term 'built environment' refers to 'an environment that has undergone large scale changes', creating a habitat that is almost exclusive to one way of knowing, being, and doing, such that all other cultures and species must adapt to the created dominant environment to survive, 'rather than a mutual adaptation of diverse habits and habitats, allowing space for continual reconstruction' (Burgh & Thornton, 2017b, pp. 13–14). A built environment is founded on epistemic assumptions, but it has an ontological dimension that is instantiated in the physical environment, social institutions and practices, and political structures. To use Patrick Wolfe's (2006) words again, invasion 'erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base, . . . settler colonizers come to stay: *invasion is a structure not an event*' (p. 388, *italics* added). In this sense, 'settler colonialism' in Australia was a form of structural invasion, accompanied by a logic of elimination, which uprooted more than 60,000 years of bioculture and transplanted British law, institutions, and environment (right down to the introduction of cottage gardens) in its stead.

Noting the discrepancy between these early accounts of Aboriginal life and the dominant story told by colonisers of Aboriginal peoples' hapless, hunter-gatherer lifestyle, Bruce Pascoe (2014) produced *Dark Emu: Black Seeds: Agriculture or accident?* The book exposed the extent to which the transplantation by the British was carried out, and in doing so demystifies another common justification for colonisation, another myth of reversal, that of the purported lack of Aboriginal 'civilisation', 'development', or 'agriculture'. He writes:

> Europe was convinced that its superiority in science, economy and religion directed its destiny. In particular the British considered their successes in industry accorded their colonial ambition a natural authority, that it was their duty to spread their version of civilisation and the word of God to heathens. In return they would capture the wealth of the colonised lands.
>
> (p. 14)

Capture it from the so-called 'nomadic savage', thought the colonisers, as 'innate superiority was the prism through which their new world was seen' (p. 12). In reading the journals of the early colonisers, Pascoe discovered repeated references to Aboriginal people building structures such as dams and wells, engaging in agricultural practice, and manipulating the landscape, all of which challenges the view of Aboriginal culture as primarily hunter-gatherer. He explicates the lengths to which colonisers went to preserve their supposed superiority:

> Colonial Australia sought to forget the advanced nature of the Aboriginal society and economy, and this amnesia was entrenched when settlers who arrived after the depopulation of whole districts found no structure more substantial than a windbreak and no population that was not humiliated, debased and diseased. This is understandable because, as is evidenced by the earlier first-hand reports, villages were burnt, the foundations stolen for other buildings, the occupants killed by warfare, murder and disease, and the country usurped. It is no wonder that after 1860 most people saw no evidence of any prior complex civilisation. Moreover, the perishable nature of materials used in Aboriginal storage devices ensured they would not be seen by archaeologists and the ferocity of the war meant such large stores of food could never be compiled again. The attacks by settlers on Aboriginals engaged in harvesting are much under-rated as one of the *tools of war*. Nutrition and morale plummeted as the croplands were mown down by sheep and cattle and people were prevented from protecting and utilising their crops. No better device, short of murder, could ensure the weakening of the enemy.
>
> (pp. 17–18, *italics* added)

With the decree of *Terra Nullius* came the imperative to ignore prior presences; life existing before the arrival of the English, and as Pascoe points out, it was an imperative designed to make people forget the extent of Aboriginal civilisation. The implementation of the doctrine of *Terra Nullius* was an act of philosophical suicide; it was a leap from grounded reason, from the evidence of Aboriginal occupation which was plainly in front of them. To use Camus' (1963) words, it was a leap towards an 'obscenity hidden under the verbal cloak' (p. 133); the verbal cloak being *Terra Nullius* which led to the obscenities of murder, displacement, abuse, and replacement of social structure. It was and still is a destructive myth of reversal created by a dominant logic attendant with the characteristic surety of belief in its own superiority, a belief to which no contradictory evidence was/is allowed to be admitted. But the belief in Western superiority over the southern land existed long before Cook even set sail. To look for the impetus of this belief I turn to early European literature.

Effectively, when the now historic convoy led by Captain Arthur Phillip arrived in January 1788, available legal recognition for Aboriginal ownership was ignored or reinterpreted to perpetuate the myth of *Terra Nullius*, and, hence, the narrative of settlement, not invasion, dominated history books and classrooms. Indeed, there is still much contention over the History curriculum and embedding Australia's Indigenous heritage in the Australian curriculum (Visentin, 2021). Yet, historical documents reveal that land was required and illegally land was taken, and as Reynolds (1987) notes, all the while Aboriginal 'occupation, their possession, was overlooked for two distinct reasons—European ignorance and European philosophical and political ideas' (p. 22). Aboriginal land was never ceded, nor was Aboriginal sovereignty ever recognised. Once it was discovered that people existed on the continent, 'European powers adopted the view that countries without political organization, recognizable systems of authority or legal codes could legitimately be annexed' (p. 12). As Plumwood (2007) puts it,

> empty land imposes no legitimate constraints on those who would annex it. Herein lies its signal service to the colonial project. Where the other is seen as a nullity commanding no consideration or recognition, projects can be formulated freely, without reference to or consideration of the claims or needs of prior inhabitants.
>
> (p. 64)

Long before Europeans reached Australian shores, the differences that allowed them to nullify the Other were already cemented in their colonial imaginaries (i.e., preconceptions of the non-Western world that can obscure the multiple histories and cultures that existed before colonialisation). According to Jacqueline Dutton (2016), early accounts of pre-colonised Australia consisted almost entirely of imagery of the farfetched, imaginative sort; in place of knowledge there was no shortage of imagination. Indeed, speculation first began around

150 CE with Ptolemy's *Geographia* and continued for centuries to come. For example, in 1943 Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle* featured

> upside-down people, who used a single huge foot as a sunshade to protect them from the blazing heat, to humans with animal heads, or their head sunk into their chest. The 'mutants' that were called 'Australians' for the first time in Gabriel de Foigny's La Terre australe connue (The Southern Land Known) (1676) are all hermaphrodites, and Rétif de la Bretonne's La Découverte australe par un homme volant (The Austral Discovery by a Flying Man) (1784) depicts not only winged men, but also hybrid horse-men, dog-men, elephant-men, frog-men and all manner of other combinations.
>
> (p. 85)

Thinking of the antipode of Europe proved fertile ground for the colonial imagination. It was also fertile ground for epistemic violence to thrive and multiply, which was to translate into physical violence not long after first arrival. Unfortunately, European writing, and the imagination behind it, improved little upon contact with Aboriginal peoples in Australia. As Dutton illustrates, even Jules Verne insulted Aboriginal peoples, 'likening them to monkeys, and describing their looks and behaviour as ugly and animalistic' (p. 91), while at the same time taking note of their slaughter in Tasmania. The murders, he wrote, 'were organised on a grand scale and entire tribes disappeared. For example, in Van Diemen's Land, [now Tasmania] which counted 500,000 indigenous people at the beginning of the century, whose inhabitants, in 1863, were reduced to 7!' (Verne, as cited in Dutton, 2016, p. 91).

Not only were mutants, monsters, and sub-humans thought to inhabit Australia, but tall tales of cannibalism were used to increase fear of the Other and justify slaughter. Katherine Biber (2005) notes that '[t]he discourse of cannibalism is a repeated and powerful trope in colonial contact and conflict. Fascination with—and accusations of—anthropophagy, ritual sacrifice and survival cannibalism disclose the fear of the native "Other"' (p. 626). Fear stimulated an overactive imagination in the colonial invaders, creating myths used to create difference, co-opt power, extend and maintain control, assert moral superiority, and later to 'deflect the guilt of invasion and genocide' (p. 626). In relation to *Terra Nullius*, Lloyd (2000) makes the following claim:

> Fictions of this kind are not illusions, set over against reality. They are constitutive of our collective construction of a social world, affecting how we see our past and how we take, or fail to take, responsibilities in our present. These are fictions that have a way of making beliefs true. In a similar way, philosophers of the western tradition could be regarded as expressing 'truthful' observations of female lesser rationality. But beliefs are formed in a context of collective imaginings, and attitudes that might otherwise seem inexplicable are shaped by the patterns of images that

organize affects and make things seem obvious for which there is no real evidence.

<div align="right">(p. 32)</div>

In the next section, I return to Plumwood to help make clear the epistemic ramifications of such myths and how they came to instantiate a colonial utopia of sorts, a utopia that was for all intents and purposes, a dystopia for those who came before, that is, Indigenous peoples. Indeed, Thomas Moore's 1516 book *Utopia*—the second half being a travel log of a journey to a mythical colonised island—stimulated, as Dutton (2016) put it, 'speculation as to the wondrous lands that might exist beyond the European horizon' (p. 85). Understanding Australia as a utopia/dystopia shows the complex ways in which myth and action interact to create social and cultural realities that shape the environment and the people it grows, or as Bill Neidjie (1996) put it, 'this earth, this ground, this piece of ground e grow you' (p. 30). The complex interactions between mythology and ontology betray the lie at the heart of our colonial notion of truth and call for a radical rethink of who we are in relation to the land and Other.

## Epistemic Violence

Many people have now come to understand the importance of acknowledging a wider definition of violence as more than physical or psychological harm (see Dotson, 2011; Spivak, 1988; Vazquez, 2011). The myth of *Terra Nullius* and the subsequent myths that perpetuate it are forms of epistemic harm, responsible for the reordering of an entire social structure, relationships with country (including meaning, housing, food production), and between people. Spivak (1988) first provides a fully fledged account of what she calls epistemic violence in her influential essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak', where she argues that the 'narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us an imperfect allegory of the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme' (p. 28). Building on Spivak's work, Kristine Dotson (2011) argues that the violent 'epistemic side of colonialism is the devastating effect of the "disappearing" of knowledge, where local or provincial knowledge is dismissed due to privileging alternative, often Western, epistemic practices' (p. 236). It could be said, then, that epistemic violence comes from the privileging of a single dominant episteme or a totalising knowledge system, which, consequently, dominates the normative and ontological landscapes of the built environment and its emerging institutional structures—family, religion, economics, law, governance, and so forth.

In Australia, English law has proven to be a particularly destructive instance of epistemic violence. In 1937, the legal scholar R.T. Latham wrote of the first European colonisers that the 'invisible and inescapable cargo of English law fell from their shoulders and attached itself to the soil on which they stood. Their personal law became the territorial law of the Colony' (Latham, as cited in Reynolds, 1987, p. 1). Those who argue for the inevitable and exceptional

nature of the law that governs Australia must ignore the history of how the law was imported and ultimately became the prime justification for the displacement of Aboriginal law, that is, they must ignore the genocidal nature of *Terra Nullius*. Latham's use of the term 'invisible' is telling. The law that dispossessed and caused the death of countless Aboriginal people was built on dominant Western rationality and 'attached itself' to the land, via the invisible epistemic realm of the colonial imaginary that continues to dominate and control the social and political landscape and shape the cultural identity of Australia. Race, as Moreton-Robinson (2015) put it, 'indelibly marks the law's possessiveness' (p. xii).

*Terra Nullius* is an extreme form of epistemic violence that made Western colonial domination and cultural genocide possible. From the imported Western legal standpoint, *Terra Nullius* extinguished, rather than expressly or implicitly relinquished, previous sovereignty, clearing the way for British law and the subsequent enactment of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900, the results of which continue to have repercussions today. Plumwood (2007) notes that, in its 'philosophical form, *Terra Nullius* is by no means gone, confined to dusty legal archives. We keep re-enacting it, not only in our treatment of Indigenous humans, but in our treatment of indigenous flora and fauna' (p. 63). *Terra Nullius* sought to nullify Indigenous cultural and agricultural practices, ontologies, epistemic practices, and methodologies that have developed through connection with Land for more than 60,000 years. Moreover, the destruction of these practices is far from over. To reiterate Wolfe's (2006) words, 'invasion is a structure, not an event' (p. 388). Doing away with prior presences, what he calls the *logic of elimination*, 'is an organizing principle of settler-colonial society' (p. 388); ever present in current societal structures and practices. Plumwood (2007) notes:

> [T]he Empty Land assumption of terra nullius remains deeply embedded in our culture and our treatment of what is (classed as) native or prior in it. The original terra nullius crime is the failure to recognize and respect prior presences. Nullification involves failing to recognize that there is something or someone else there, a prior presence which must constrain and limit our actions and expectations.
>
> (p. 63)

Nullification often comes attendant with an active process of replacement, a reordering. Colonisation, as Wolfe (2006) asserts, 'destroys to replace' (p. 388).[3]

To give an example of how the logic of elimination is operational today, I turn to Plumwood's (2007) recounting of her experience fighting for a remnant of native ecology, a sliver of grassland that was populated with rare orchids endemic to the area. The area happened to be a cemetery in which she would later bury her son. In her attempt to preserve the orchids, in 1994, she wrote to the local council and to the local committee charged with the

cemetery's upkeep, the aptly named Progress Association, 'urging them to develop a management plan' (p. 59). She had thought the knowledge would be welcomed and valued. The orchids, after all, were an important part of the area's history, of its ecology, and two of the species were listed as endangered. Furthermore, they were beautiful. She writes of her reaction upon discovering them, 'never anywhere had I seen anything like this purple glory. It was unforgettable, thrilling the heart and taking the breath away' (p. 57).

The Progress Association was, however, deeply entrenched in its ideals of tidiness, and deeply committed to its programme of pesticide use, lawns and lawn mowing, and rosemary and rose plantings. In other words, it was committed to the instantiation of the colonial landscape and the nullification of the native. The response Plumwood received from the Council and the Progress Association was less than she had hoped. In fact, it was 'unexpectedly hostile and negative' (p. 60). Subsequently, the Progress Association responded with 'personal vilification in their newsletter' (p. 61) and Plumwood found herself accused of neglecting her son's grave. She was judged and found wanting, ironically on the evidence of her lack of commitment to their programme of cemetery upkeep, her lack of conformity to their ideals of 'tidiness'. By not 'tidying' her son's grave, she was deemed to be in the wrong and, subsequently, a myth of her inadequacy was perpetuated, a myth designed to suppress and silence her. Recognising the value of the existing ecology—the pre-colonial landscape—she chose to respect rather than tidy her son's grave, that is, she chose not to kill the orchids, the life existing before her arrival.

Plumwood's (1993a) concerns regarding tidiness can be traced back to her views on wilderness in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*.

> Wilderness is not a place where there is no interaction between self and other, but one where self does not impose itself. It is a place to be visited on its own terms and not on ours. Here it is the visitor who is the taught and not the teacher, the transformed and not the transformer, visitors who must see themselves through the other's eyes, must bend themselves, as is appropriate for visitors, to the other's ways.
>
> (p. 164)

The committee's response was not an equally considered opposition, but a swift and prejudicial one that sought to nullify, to obliterate wilderness and the perspective of those who would stand with it, rather than 'bend themselves' to 'other's ways'. Their response gave no voice to her concerns, made no attempt at understanding, and failed to listen or acknowledge another perspective that did not fit with their own dominant rationality. The only effort made was an attempt to use judgement to silence; the force of colonial normativity was brought against her. We have, Plumwood (2007) claimed, normalised a 'severely depleted landscape, that the economic system is steadily grinding down' (p. 63), and anything else is deemed unacceptable.

Ideals of tidiness, such as those enforced by the Progress Association, are used to maintain order, control, and domination and to justify measures such as the killing of indigeneity, the destruction of prior presences. Ideals such as these are underpinned by the same dominant Western conception of rationality that was operational in the declaration of *Terra Nullius*. It is a war against prior presences, including nature. Her definition of wilderness is important; to visit the wild without imposition, to learn from it, first we must acknowledge its existence, and respect rather than fear it. But respect requires an acknowledgement of the Other's limitations, and unfortunately, all too often, 'order is the overriding virtue' (p. 64); order which must be imposed, and the wild, which stands in opposition, is placed outside of moral consideration. Just as the native orchids must be tidied, the Other must be brought to order, must be subsumed, consumed by the law. As Biber (2005) aptly noted:

> Law always constructs an Other. It draws boundaries around itself. Everything within the boundary is within law's jurisdiction. Everything outside the boundary is lawless. It is the intention of the law to bring everything within its own boundaries; there should be nothing that is outside.
>
> (p. 625)

The act of involuntarily restructuring a life is violent, and the act of restructuring an entire culture is genocidal. The failure to recognise and respect prior presences in the case of the orchids extends to the grasslands, the soil microbes, and the ecosystem that sustains them. In the case of Aboriginal peoples, both the land and the law that structured their society were taken away through a failure to recognise their legal status as humans. Siegfried Wiessner (1999) explains that '[s]ince indigenous inhabitants of a settled colony had no recognized sovereign, they were considered to be without laws, and the English common law was imposed' (p. 72). By bringing Aboriginal people under common law, the law became a weapon of colonialism. John Chesterman and Brian Galligan (1997) note that the early 1800s were marked by out-and-out violence:

> Indiscriminate killings of Aborigines accompanied their forced removal from any lands considered useful to settlers. In the absence of the rule of law, settlers largely determined the manner in which they would deal with Aborigines. Often this perceived freedom was attended by the belief that Aborigines simply had no rights, and were free to be treated as sub-humans.
>
> (p. 33)

Just as the taking of land by the colonisers under English law was theft, the killing of Aboriginal peoples was murder and 'made their killers legally liable to be hanged' (p. 34). However, the force of the law was rarely if ever brought

to bear on those responsible for such atrocities; instead of responsibility, there were justifications. Justifications based on the belief in Aboriginal people's inferiority drove

> the general silence of those whites at the 'frontier' [. . .] the use of euphemisms such as 'disperse' rather than 'kill' when reference in public was occasionally made to conflicts with Aborigines, and the adoption of the metaphor of war to cover indisputable acts of violence.
>
> <div align="right">(p. 34)</div>

In response, the rhetoric of 'protection', another myth of reversal, was introduced in the mid-1800s and used as means to further control the lives of Aboriginal peoples, this time through legislation. The difference in the treatment of Aboriginal peoples due to location is significant and linked to the formation of Australia as a federation, with initial colonies becoming the states and territories of Australia. The policies 'to deal with' Aboriginal peoples, introduced by individual colonies, were then translated into state legislation, resulting in each state having different laws regarding Aboriginal peoples. The belief that underpinned the use of broad legislation was that Aboriginal people needed heavily regulated government control. So, it was that '[w]hat had been done in the previous century by force would now be done by law' (p. 122). The myth of *Terra Nullius* morphed into a myth of protection.

Reserves, stations, and missions were created in Victoria as early as 1838 and in 1869 *An Act to Provide for the Protection and Management of the Aboriginal Natives of Victoria* was passed. Queensland followed suit with the *Aboriginals' Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*, and eight years later Western Australia passed the *Aborigines Act 1905*. This was followed five years later with the passing of the *Northern Territory Aboriginals Act 1910* and shortly after South Australia passed its *Aborigines Act 1911*. The devastating effect of these laws cannot be overstated. All aspects of Aboriginal lives were brought under the control of the state, from where they could eat to who they could marry and everything in between. The mass abduction, or in official speak, the 'forced removal' of children also emerged as a result of these laws. But it is evident in the diaries of the early explorer and polymath, Ludwig Leichhardt (2013), that these laws were the result of a certain Western logic. Leichhardt summaries the 'protectionist' logic operational during early invasion that foreshadowed future treatment and control of Aboriginal people:

> There is a means to preserve them . . . this means is slavery. I should say compulsion, but compulsion on a large scale is slavery, because the latter just involves somewhat brutal compulsion by unprincipled gentlemen too. We must take the young generations by force, educate them, compel them to work and so get them used to work . . . because without

compulsion, this Black, left to himself, will be irretrievably lost as soon
as he comes into contact with civilisation and its vices.

<div align="right">(p. 325)</div>

Note that the open brutality that would result in Aboriginal lives being
'lost' (as opposed to taken, stolen, violently and illegally ended), while an
indictment of the coloniser's 'vices' (acts of murder by murderers) is not called
into question. And on the back of this logic, paternalistic laws were introduced
which regulated the victim and not the perpetrator, as a solution to violence.[4]
Eventually the emphasis on protection was overtake the language of assimila-
tion, as Chesterman and Galligan (1997) note:

> The emphasis in Aboriginal policy shifted from protecting the last mem-
> bers of an ancient people to confining and regulating what white soci-
> ety considered to be an undesirable racial minority. Powers to remove
> Aboriginal people to reserves and keep them there under tight controls
> were increased. There was also more concern with merging or absorbing
> 'half-castes' into white society, as procedures for taking children from
> their mothers and communities were refined.

<div align="right">(p. 8)</div>

The 'taking of children' was, I will argue in the next chapter, a strategic evolu-
tion of dominant logic, and as we will see shortly, this paternalistic, epistemi-
cally violent, colonial philosophy is still very much alive and well in Australia.

**Same logic, new packaging**

Chesterman and Galligan argue that while the initial imposition of colonial
law recognised Aboriginal peoples as subjects, it did not afford them the right
to rule, merely the right to be ruled (p. 3), and in many states, from the late
1800s to the early 1900s legislation was brought in to prevent Aboriginal peo-
ple from voting, largely out of fear of their numbers influencing the election
outcomes (p. 13). In Victoria, where this legislation was lacking mainly due
to the vastly diminished numbers of Aboriginal people left after early invasion,
active discouragement and a requirement of proof that they were not receiv-
ing 'charitable relief' prevented most from voting, as they were considered
'"inmates" of charitable institutions' (p. 14), and inmates were ineligible to
vote.[5] Charitable relief was quite different from the basic benefits of citizenship
in the late 1800s to early 1900s, 'such as the maternity allowance and invalid
and old-age pensions' (p. 12), the receipt of which was limited to colonisers.
This 'exclusionary regime', as Chesterman and Galligan call it, 'was meticu-
lously enforced to keep Aboriginal people as non-citizens for more than half
a century' (p. 12). Constraints on Aboriginal voters at the Commonwealth
level, in the Northern Territory, and Western Australia were in place until
1962, and in Queensland they remained until 1965 (p. 15). In other states,

the extension of the vote was accomplished piecemeal at different times by repealing racist policies, laws, and regulations.

Contrary to popular belief, it was *not* the 1967 referendum that finally conferred citizenship rights on Aboriginal peoples. The referendum was a vote to alter the constitution to remove the government restriction upon making laws regarding Aboriginal peoples and to allow Aboriginal peoples to be counted as part of the Australian population. The establishment of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs was a notable result, with the first Minister for Aboriginal Affairs appointed in 1968. However, it would take another four years before a dedicated department was created. In the years that followed, many new acts were passed, including one of the most influential passed in 1993: *The Native Title Act.*

The fight for *The Native Title Act* began 11 years prior to it being passed. In 1982 Eddie Koiki Mabo, along with four other Merian people, challenged the lack of recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty by Australian law. Earlier challenges were made such as the 1963 *Milirrpum v. Nabalco Pty. Ltd.* Case, in which the Yolngu people of Yirrkala in Arnhem Land 'asserted that their occupation of the Gove Peninsula predated the Crown's acquisition of sovereignty over Australia' (Hill, 1995, p. 306). Although unsuccessful, publicity from this case led to the release of two reports in the 1970s that were subsequently 'used in the development of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976' (p. 306). This early act paved the way for the Mabo decision, which, although begun in 1982, was not decided until 3 June 1992 when 'the High Court rewrote the legal as well as social and political history of Australia in *Mabo v. Queensland*' (p. 306). This historic decision effectively overturned *Terra Nullius* and resulted in the 1993 *Native Title Act* which recognised the rights and interests of some Aboriginal peoples to some of their traditional lands. As Lloyd (2000) aptly describes this historic event: 'Although the area of land explicitly at issue was tiny, the significance of the judgement was profound' (p. 30).

However, the 1976 Act was, in at least one respect, more significant; it gave Aboriginal peoples the right to veto developments on their land rather than only the right to negotiate, which was granted under the 1993 Act. According to Damien Short (2010), given this shortcoming, the primary purpose of the Act

> was the validation of existing commercial titles and the provision of guarantees that future land negotiations would be conducted within the parameters set by existing colonial power inequalities, thus ensuring that the native title regime would offer indigenous peoples no protection from settler colonial expansionist pressures powered by the engine of global capitalism.
>
> (p. 55)

Subsequently, both the 1993 and the 1976 Acts have been subjected to further limitations by government 'reforms', which Short calls 'a process of erosion' and deems 'a modern day example of what Patrick Wolfe has termed the "logic of elimination"' (p. 54).

Continuing this process of erosion, in 2007, in the heavily contested Northern Territory, a region that contains approximately '30% of the world's currently identified uranium reserves' (p. 59), the Howard Government brought in what is often referred to as 'the Intervention', officially the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act, following a report entitled the *Little Children are Sacred*. As Moreton-Robinson (2015) observed, the federal government intervention 'sent military and police into Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory on the premise that the sexual abuse of children was rampant and a national crisis. This "crisis" was constructed as something extraordinary and aberrant, requiring new governmental measures' (p. 153). Moreton-Robinson's words provide an account of the Intervention as a new form of colonisation in an old package, with Aboriginal people once again construed as 'primitive people, nomadic, sexually promiscuous, *illogical, superstitious, irrational*, emotive, deceitful, simpleminded, violent, and uncivilized' (p. 157, *italics* added). Moreover, they were 'perceived as living in a state of nature that was in opposition to the discourse of white civility' (p. 57). Anyone wishing to inhabit a space outside of the dominant logic is deemed illogical, yet another myth of reversal. This discourse was racist as it 'enabled patriarchal white sovereignty to deny Indigenous people their sovereign rights while regulating and disciplining their behavior through legislative and political mechanisms and physical and social measures' (p. 157).

To implement the Intervention, the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act needed to be suspended. This requirement alone should have been a stop sign for a respectful government that recognised its citizen's rights to self-determination. However, dehumanising Aboriginal peoples allowed the government to once again 'intervene in the lives of Indigenous people to let them live and to make them live as welfare-dependent citizens, not as property-owning subjects with sovereign resource rights' (p. 172). The Intervention sought to restore governmental control over Aboriginal bodies, once again banning alcohol consumption, once again stealing land, this time under the guise of the 'the compulsory acquisition of Aboriginal townships through five year leases' (Short, 2010, p. 56), and once again controlling benefits and using citizenship and the law as weapons. Consequently, Indigenous peoples had no 'effective means to resist the now "inevitable" increase in uranium mining in Australia, resulting in yet further culturally genocidal pressures on some indigenous groups' (p. 59).

What of the children, the initial justification for the intervention? Mandatory health checks were brought in along with the above measures, but as Moreton-Robinson (2015) observes:

> The Federal Department of Health's analysis of the mandatory child health checks revealed that out of the 7,433 mandatory health checks of Indigenous children in the Northern Territory, only 39 were considered at risk of neglect or abuse, and only 4 children were identified as being sexually abused.
>
> (p. 171)

She also points out the gaping discrepancy in treatment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people:

> The government deals with child sexual abuse in white homes as though it is something aberrant that requires intervention only on a case-by-case basis. There is no intervention into the whole community where the perpetrators reside; instead, the civil rights of perpetrators are respected. In contrast, child sexual abuse is treated as being *normative* within Indigenous communities, requiring everyone to be placed under surveillance, scrutinized, and punished. In this way, the receipt of welfare payments, which is a social right, allows the government to discipline Indigenous people at the margins of Australian society.
>
> (p. 165, *italics* added)

Once again, the receipt of welfare payments was used to control the Other, just as at the time of early colonisation payments were used to prevent Indigenous peoples from voting. Time has moved on, but the methods of colonisation have changed little. The colonial practices of the past remain active in Australian politics, bolstered by a racist socio-cultural imaginary. Even though *Terra Nullius* was eventually overturned, it

> allowed non-indigenous Australians to think that there was no need to adapt to the presence of the people who were already there, and no need to acknowledge their customs or law. It encouraged the idea that adaptation only needed to go in one direction, and that this enforced adaptation, rather than being an imposition of something alien, was a gift and the promise of a fullness of humanity that could never have been attained if the Europeans had not come.
>
> (Lloyd, 2000, p. 32)

Lloyd is here describing the positive spin that is still all too commonly placed on dehumanisation. The 'fullness of humanity' is an ongoing belief in Plato's assertion of reason as the benchmark for being human. Likewise, the Intervention was an extension of the punishment Plato ascribed to those deemed lacking in rationality.

## Conclusion

While the devastating effects of colonial logic and the ongoing violence towards Aboriginal peoples in Australia would take many a book to document, in this chapter, I have highlighted some points of significance to demonstrate that colonisation, conceptualised as a war against a marginalised Other, both nature and human, has used myths of reversal to create and perpetuate epistemic violence of genocidal proportions in Australia and elsewhere. To this end, I reiterated Moreton-Robinson's (2015) point that 'Indigenous peoples

have been sociohistorically constructed through first world Western knowl-edge systems that are ontologically and epistemologically grounded in dif-ferentiation' (p. xvii). This differentiation is driven by the dominant logic of liberal individualism and principles of classical liberalism that culminate in the current parliamentary system in Australia, together with its institutional prac-tices, including education. Indeed, liberal democracy in Australia, like its USA and British counterparts, could well be described as a neoliberal economic sys-tem bolstered by an oligarchical political system that undermines democracy itself, due to the systemic lack of democratic correctiveness maintained and perpetuated by social institutions. The lack of epistemic diversity, especially contributions by Indigenous peoples' unique cultural practices, beliefs, and knowledge systems that have evolved over tens of thousands of years, has failed Australian democracy. This is nowhere more evident than in Australia's inabil-ity to politically respond to environmental degradation and social and environ-mental injustice. An understanding of how Indigenous knowledge has been excluded is crucial to both the removal of ongoing blocks to the inclusion of such knowledge in the future and the development of pedagogical strategies for effective climate change education. I have argued that the failure to recog-nise prior presences is a systematic failure of shared socio-political epistemic frameworks, a failure to see the world without first committing philosophical suicide. It is a failure underpinned by heavenistic notions of truth that rely on certainty, which are the focus of the next chapter.

## Notes

1  I say invasion as settlement is appropriate for settled land, that is, land that was previously vacant, as this was not the case in Australia, as many battles were fought over the land, invasion is the fitting term. For further information on the 'frontier wars', see Barritt-Eyles (2018). As explained earlier, I will use the term 'coloniser' or 'colonial identity' in place of the usual 'settler' nomenclature. I do this to create consistency and maintain a link to our shared colonial past, lest we forget the pain and suffering caused.
2  Progress, in this sense of the word, is a tool of colonisation.
3  Examples of nullification at work can be found all over the world. These are often intentional acts, other times they are 'failures to recognise' a site as anything but 'un-tidy', for example the case of the Spanish workers who 'fixed' a 6,000-year-old Neo-lithic tomb. See: www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/08/27/435203455/ancient-tomb-in-spain-destroyed-and-replaced-with-a-picnic-table
4  It should be noted that Leichhardt (2013) was not an advocate of this course of action, as in a footnote to the above he expresses the following opinion: '[a]lthough slavery seems the only means to preserve these tribes and in the course of genera-tions to civilise them, I would prefer to see them die in freedom than be civilised in slavery. That is my opinion on 15 February 1844 and it will probably remain forever' (p. 325).
5  I use the word 'citizenship' for clarity, however, technically prior to 1948 the term used was 'British Subjects'. In 1948 'Australian citizenship' was first created as a legal category (see Chesterman, 2005).

# 4 Truth, certainty, and the limits of knowledge

## Introduction

According to Plumwood (2002), it is 'important to demonstrate the imprudence of anthropocentrism, for example by showing the extent of uncertainty and the limits of our knowledge' (p. 113). In large part, our lives revolve around certainties, points on which we depend, the certainty of our loved ones, our homes, the water flowing from the tap, and the source of our next meal. But all of these certainties, which we largely take for granted, are, upon reflection, far from certain. When the support networks, the systems that govern our lives, politically, physically, and emotionally, are stable, our lives are more-or-less stable, and we habituate to them, thus, perpetuating the systems. However, when these systems are shaken by forces outside of our reach, we feel the tremors within our sense of self. The relationship between global stability providing systems, such as climate, politics, culture, trade, and the ways in which we order our lives, is complex.

Historically, philosophers have made attempts to understand these complex relationships, and in doing so have contributed to the ordering of society, insofar as their writings have influenced how populations think and act, particularly through the provision of concepts that have laid the epistemic foundations of social institutions, such as governments, legal systems, and education. For example, in Western societies, the thoughts of modern liberal thinkers, such as John Locke, and John Stuart Mill, still echo in the speeches of politicians who hail the enduring quality of Western values, particularly the relationship between these values and national identity. Indeed, John Locke's ideas on natural law, social contract, religious toleration, and the right to revolution were essential as justifications for the American Revolution and, subsequently, the US Constitution. Since the mid-twentieth century, Western values have been exported worldwide via radio, film, recorded music, television, and telecommunications, all of which have been vital for the expansion of modern globalisation.

As previously argued, mitigation of the current environmental crisis is marred by liberal democracy's lack of capacity for correctiveness and, thus, its inability to detect and respond to social, economic, and environmental

problems. The emergence, in the 1970s, of environmental ethics, which considered the philosophical aspects of environmental problems, was an attempt to urge a re-thinking of the relationship between humans and the non-human world set out by philosophies such as liberalism, with its reliance on natural law and the rational individual. Liberalism is but one example of a dominant logic. To understand the epistemic root of environmental degradation we need to go straight to the logic.

My task in this chapter then, is to trace some of the ways in which dominant logic is hewn upon the earth and earth Others, from Plato's stark separations to history's Amphitheatre. I concur with Plumwood (1993a) that we need 'a common, integrated framework for the critique of both human domination and the domination of nature' (pp. 1–2). In my earlier discussion of Plumwood's work, I explored her theory of the othering of nature, particularly in the work of Plato, in which she introduces the concept of 'heavenism'. Here, I revisit heavenism to argue that it creates an othering not only of nature but of self, before tracing heavenism's influence on Western conceptions of death, history, and truth—all of which have a bearing on the theory and practice of education.

Plumwood (1990) argues that Plato's epistemology provides a rationalist justification for the destruction of the 'particular', the corrupt material instantiation of the Forms, which, she says, 'not only devalues nature but is profoundly anti-ecological and anti-life; it is truly a *philosophy of death*' (p. 534, *italics* added). The devaluation of the earth and the proposed separation of the 'true self', from both the biological earth and biological human body, is an integral part of the logic of domination, which permeates modern-day institutions. Camus (1964), as discussed previously, was also concerned with philosophies of death; those which cut short or limit the potential for creation, preservation, or renewal of life. Recall that he argued all such philosophies are preceded by an epistemic act of philosophical suicide, an attempt to transcend the earth. He further divided these attempts into two camps, the martyr and the lion: 'history's amphitheatre has always contained the martyr and the lion. The former relied on eternal consolations and the latter on raw historical meat' (p. 4). I argue that the logic which both camps inscribe upon the world is akin to the logic of domination, which results in a particular ordering of a society that marginalises the Other. I show how the rejection of heavenism opens the way towards a rejection of transcendental conceptions of truth and a reordering of power relations. I conclude by linking the discussion to climate change and the implications for education.

### Transcendental epistemology or the myth of heavenism

Plumwood (1990), as previously discussed, interprets Plato as perceiving death as a breaking free from the 'corrupt state of the world of nature' (p. 525), a release of human essence from that which binds and limits it, the body. In the case of many of the world's major religions, the starting point is the same; the

view that this biology is not me, that this body is not my true house. The story continues, it is but temporary accommodation while I live out this life according to the moral standards deemed necessary for entry into the transcendental world. This existence, everything I've ever known, is not my 'true' self; the essence of me resides or is destined to reside, upon my death, upon my true self's freedom from my body, from the biological, from the 'wretched earth', elsewhere. There are many beliefs as to where elsewhere might be; indeed, such beliefs are not restricted to religion. As Plumwood reminds us, the issue remains that, historically, this argument, this othering of self, from self, has dominated Western philosophy since at least the time of Plato. She argues that his conception of 'true knowledge and purity can be achieved only if we have what he called the "least possible intercourse or communion with the body" and "its foolishness"' (p. 525). True knowledge, like our true self, is to be found elsewhere, in another 'world, which of course lies above our world' (p. 525). Belief in this kind of self discredits the value of life and my knowledge of it; what I see, what I feel, what I experience, accordingly, is all corrupt. The earth, our body, our very biology is not to be trusted. For Plato, true knowledge is to be found in the incorruptible, unchanging realm of the Forms; 'biological change and decay are viewed with disgust' (p. 525). Both the biological self and the earth from whence it springs are othered. With this othering comes the instantiation of dualisms that have been used as justification for the maltreatment of earth, and body; our own and others, both human and non-human (Plumwood, 1993a, 2002). Notions of a corrupt and sacred earth can be seen in rituals around death and last resting places.

Plumwood (2007), used the cemetery in which her son was buried, as we saw earlier, as an example of the ways in which our belief-habits shape our environment. In many countries, cemeteries are increasingly becoming recognised as outposts of biodiversity. In urban areas they are often the last bastions of the pre-urban environment. Cordoned off from the sprawling, built environment or, as in Plumwood's example, from the ever-roaming cattle, they preserve a kind of wilderness, a system of life existing within our systems of rational expansion. The Australian government describes cemeteries as 'life-saving refuges for some of the nation's most endangered native plants; even for entire native ecosystems'.[1] But this is not, as Plumwood (2007) points out, 'due to human care', but rather due to 'human neglect' (p. 8). Cemeteries then, are not safe from the rationalist war on nature, indeed in many ways they embody it. She says:

> For what theologian Norman Habel calls heavenism, the earth is at best a temporary lodging; the true human home is beyond the earth, in heaven. Buried six-feet down, the strong wooden or steel coffin aims to keep the heaven-bound body apart from the earth and other life forms for as long as possible and to preserve it for departure to its higher home. For this transcendental solution to the problem of death and continuity, we are split into an embodied and perishable part belonging to earth,

and a thinking imperishable 'spirit' part belonging to heaven. Bodies must perish, but the soul has eternal life.

(p. 56)

The hyper-separation of the human body from earth Other in death is a continuation of the hyper-separation of humans from nature in life, as '[s]uch transcendental solutions to the problem of identity and continuity depend on denying our kinship to other life forms and our shared end as food for others' (p. 56). The all-too-common horror experienced at the thought of humans being eaten, either by worms in death or crocodiles in life, stands in stark contrast to the lack of horror we experience at the death of Other. According to Plumwood (2008), '[h]orror movies, stories and jokes reflect our deep-seated dread of becoming food for other forms of life: horror is the wormy corpse, vampires sucking blood and sci-fi monsters trying to eat humans' (p. 324). The refusal to nourish earth Others, even in death, is part of the type of 'hyper-separation that propels the environmental crisis' (p. 324). Such hyper-separation, she insists, 'remains an important force in our culture, and has profoundly shaped dominant practices of self, commodity, materiality and death—especially death. For an ecological culture, major rethinking is required' (p. 325). Such rethinking requires an acceptance of death, one to be found in Camus.

'"Ah!" he said before dying, "so this world is not made for me and this house is not mine"' (Camus, 2010, p. 46). If we were religiously inclined, this would *not* be the epiphany we would hope to have on our death bed. For Camus, however, there is no heavenly thereafter, no preservation of conscience or essence of human such as a soul, at least none of which we can be certain, and, therefore, such an epiphany is consistent with his philosophy. Moreover, it points to the absence of absolute ownership in the face of an ephemeral life. We understand that our ownership of our house is contingent, and at least in most Western countries if we do not sell it before we die, ownership is bequeathed, usually to our relations, but regardless, ownership passes on to others still breathing. If we reject, as Camus did, the eternal ownership of self, of soul, we come to see that death ends our ownership of house, earth, body, and self. Such concepts are contingent on life as we are contingent on life. As Plumwood (2012) says: 'In the complex biological exchange which sustains all our lives, we must all gain sustenance at the expense of the other' (p. 60). Our lives are dependent on nutrients from others, and in death the nutrients from our bodies, like our houses, pass on to others still breathing. Plumwood (2008) provides the following analogy:

I can discern a kind of fairness and sharing in all this, justice, and even a kind of democracy. As I see it now, on the *earth community model*, life is like a book, but not the kind of book you can own or buy. It's much more like a library book. You don't own it—it's borrowed from the earth community circulating library. Like a library book, you can only have it

for so long, and exceptions to this rule are never made. Like a library book, it's subject to immediate recall by another borrower—and you haven't even finished reading/writing it! *Attempts to excessively prolong or immortalise human life are attempts to steal the library book and cheat the earth community, to take nurturance from others but not to give it back.*

(p. 325, *italics* added)

But neither does Plumwood think that the book disappears upon return to the library. Atheism or the 'finality thesis depends on a covert continuation of the heavenist identification of self with spirit, and on a thoroughly reductionist and denarrativised understanding of the body and of materiality that results from spirit/matter dualism' (p. 328). Rejecting both the concept of a soul and the finality thesis opens the possibility of an explanation of death as a contingent continuity of life, as a renewal of life writ large rather than a continuation of individual life. As Plumwood says, '[a] more fluid and embodied concept of self and its boundaries can be employed here to suggest a complex narrative of continuities, in which the story goes on, although no longer mainly a story about human subjects' (p. 328). Letting go of the idea of transcendental continuity of self opens a space for the concept of an embedded self (which will become important in following chapters), but it also calls into question another aspect of our anthropocentric view of the world only briefly touched on earlier: instrumentalism.

> Instrumentalism involves the assumption that all other species are available for unrestricted human use, although it is unlikely that many of those steeped in the ideology of human supremacy will see humans as mutually and reciprocally available for non-human use (for example, as food). Instrumentalism in this form is a clear expression of anthropocentrism and of an arrogant attitude to the other which sees it in the guise of a servant of the self.
>
> (Plumwood, 2002, p. 113)

Instrumentalism has ramifications for a range of areas of human activity, not the least of which is the meat industry, namely, the unrestricted, wholesale instrumentalisation of the non-human Other. The many and varied ethical failures of the livestock industry stem from the initial dehumanisation of non-human animals. Dehumanisation is the stripping away of that which is thought to make a human more than an animal, more than nature. The creation of the human is then at the expense of the non-human. This dualism brings into being a superior subject and an inferior object. The superior half of the dualism is defined in opposition to the inferior, hence the dehumanisation of human animals is brought about via the initial dehumanisation of animals and nature; humans deemed inferior are lumped in with non-human animals and nature. The inferior status of non-human animals and accompanying lack of moral consideration conferred upon them has given rise to the multi-billion-dollar

global meat industry and all the problems that go along with it. In Chapter 11: 'Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use' (AFOLU) of the IPCC *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change* report, Pete Smith et al. (2014) state that '[t]he AFOLU sector is responsible for just under a quarter (~10–12 $GtCO_2eq/yr$) of anthropogenic GHG emissions mainly from deforestation and agricultural emissions from livestock, soil and nutrient management' (p. 816). Such a substantial contribution to emissions means that changing human habits of meat consumption is a point of possible mitigation of greenhouse gases (GHG). They also note that the modelling of '[c]hanged diets resulted in GHG emission savings of 34–64% compared to the "business-as-usual" scenario' (p. 840). Included in this range is the

> 'adoption of a "healthy diet" recommended by the Harvard Medical School', which highlights that even a decrease in meat consumption to a 'healthy' level would have a substantive impact on emissions reduction and aid humanity in staying below the '450ppm CO2eq concentration target'.
>
> (p. 840)

The large quantity of meat humans consume is linked to the industrialisation of animals, which, in turn, is linked to the process of colonisation. Marc Trabsky (2014) observed that the institutionalisation of the slaughterhouse in Australia was used as 'a tool for justifying the segregation and quarantine, but also importantly the regulation, of the "outcasts" of British colonial society' (p. 177), including Aboriginal peoples. Trabsky takes Melbourne as a case study of the ways in which the industrialisation of the meat industry has affected human relationships with animals other-than-human. Early colonial Melbournians, he explains, saw their ability to keep and kill animals in their backyards as a fundamental right (p. 180). However, in 1850 the *Melbourne Abattoirs Act* was passed, and citizens were no longer allowed to house and kill animals for their own consumption. The Act 'confined the slaughtering of animals to prescribed public abattoirs, while at the same time prohibiting the killing of sheep, lamb, pigs or goats at any other place within the city limits' (p. 180). Such restrictions fundamentally changed the human and non-human animal relationship and allowed for the increased marketability of animal production. In other words, such laws turned animals into objects and into industry. Resultingly, '[t]he slaughtering of animals could now be named, placed and ordered by and through regulations and legislation. It could become a technical object in a routinised industrial process' (p. 181)—another case of the pen ordering the sword.

A once visual and understood practice became hidden from public view and largely from public knowledge. Although the Melbourne City Council created the industry and by extension the brought the profession of butcher to Australia, it also disavowed them to gain greater control over the industry and to aid in moving the practice away from the eyes of the public, particularly

children. It is noteworthy, that this was a practice that predated Melbourne, having its origins in London.

> The practice of slaughtering animals was believed to desensitise butchers to violence between humans, which led the committee to imply that they were strangely similar in disposition to the animals with which they shared their space. Proposed regulations banning children from visiting slaughterhouses and prohibiting slaughterers from joining the ranks of teachers were several consequences of the committee's report. In some cases British municipal authorities enforced such regulations, particularly given the presupposition that slaughterhouses had an *'immoral influence'* on children who frequented them to 'witness the death-struggles of the butcher's victims'.
>
> (p. 174, *italics* added)

The shielding of children from the realities of the meat industry is a practice that continues to this day, albeit lately there have been calls for children to once again witness where their food comes from, a call that is not without precedent in countries where killing animals for food is still part of cultural practice.[2] The practice of hiding animal death from view, Plumwood (2012) asserts, 'denies kinship and generates a conceptual distance or boundary between humanity and its "meat"' (p. 61). She points to Native American cultural practices surrounding the killing of animals as a successful way of both maintaining kin with animals while at the same time acknowledging their role as food. 'It is', she says, 'this refusal to deny the *dilemma* in which we are implicated in this life, a refusal to take the way of bad faith, moral supremacy, or self-deception which constitutes a radical challenge to our relationships to our food' (p. 61, *italics* added). Plumwood reminds us of the importance of acknowledging moral dilemmas rather than explaining them away, a point I will return to in the next section. Part of refusing justifications for either side of the moral dilemma is the refusal to see ourselves as separate from the animals and the earth, and, instead, to recognise that we are part of a diverse, complex, and connected 'nature'. However, there is also a vast difference between the massive slaughtering facilities in industrialised nations, where in 2019 an estimated 72 billion chickens, 3.3 billion ducks, 1.3 billion pigs, 636 million turkeys, 602 million sheep, 502 million goats, and 324 million cattle were killed for meat production around the world,[3] and the cultural practices that predate them. The former, as Plumwood points out, relies on exploited labourers, the work 'so terrible and poorly paid that only the slave-like workforce of the carceral system, or those coerced by other forms of desperation such as indentured immigrants, are available as workers' (p. 57).

Not only were slaughterhouses brought into being through colonial laws, Maneesha Deckha (2017) proposes that the instrumentalisation of animals was used as a justification for the need to 'civilise' colonial subjects. She writes that the so-called '"Truth" that Western cultures are more animal-friendly

than non-Western ones may be traced to classical and modern European epistemologies and, particularly, their expression through colonial laws' (p. 65). Violence against animals, she further explains, was used to justify violence against humans by the coloniser, that is, the killing of animals for food was taken as evidence of the 'savagery' of the Other and used as a narrative of dehumanisation to strengthen the civilised/savage dualism. As she puts it, the dualism 'served to justify the colonial ideology that colonial subjects were subhuman wards who required legal rehabilitation through anti-cruelty laws and other morals-directed legal regulation to cultivate their humanity' (p. 65). Deckha goes on to echo Moreton-Robinson's point regarding the unequal, prejudicial, and paternalistic nature of the laws created to control the Other (such as the Intervention as discussed in the last chapter). She writes that

> [t]his association between cruelty to animals and racialized subhumanity prevailed in colonial governance despite the astonishing levels of violence towards animals in Britain among the propertied classes whose practices of animal consumption or hunting, for example, never led the British to question their own humanity.
>
> (p. 66)

Once again, we find the discourse of dehumanisation operationalised through myths of reversal, in this case invented narratives of civility that the inventors themselves fail to meet; 'social problems are considered to be any forms of behavior that violate the norms of white civility' (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 160). Such failures usually come attendant with judgements of immorality, from those who meet the norm against those who do not, and form the bedrock of judgement upon which laws are inscribed and punitive measures are laid. Deckha (2017) argues that the charge of immorality, the selectively condemned violence against non-human animals, was used to regulate and bring the Other into line with the norms of 'civilised' society based on their 'bad behaviour'; a case of morality used to assimilate, a method which should now be familiar given the ground covered in the previous chapter (the orchids, the Stolen Generations, the *Little Children are Sacred* report, and subsequent intervention). Discourses of morality, then, were and are used to both create and 'civilise' the Other.

In the next section, I look at Camus' interpretation of history. He argues that history as a concept has played into the separation of humans from the earth and furthered the denial of an interconnected conception of nature. The denial of kinship Plumwood speaks of takes on further ethical significance when seen as a rejection of the moral limit of the life of the Other. I will argue that, in the absence of absolute ethics, we must preserve the recognition of such moral limits to arrest the perpetuation of epistemic violence in a colonial system that routinely reverses, obscures, mystifies, hides, or normalises its own moral transgressions.

**History's amphitheatre**

Camus once claimed of his childhood that the economic hardships that faced his family moved him to rebellion on behalf of others, and thereby forged his commitment to end suffering writ large. In *Lyrical and Critical Essays,* Camus (1970) later recalls:

> To correct a natural indifference, I was placed halfway between poverty and the sun. Poverty kept me from thinking all was well under the sun and in history; the sun taught me that history was not everything. I wanted to change lives, yes, but not the world which I worshipped as divine [. . .]. It was not poverty that got in my way: in Africa, the sun and the sea cost nothing. The obstacle lay rather in *prejudices* or stupidity.
> (p. 7, *italics* added)

For Camus, poverty alone was not insufferable, not evil in itself; one could do much with very little. Indeed, he clung 'like a miser to the freedom that disappears as soon as there is an excess of things' (p. 9). What was insufferable, what was a gross injustice, was 'the double humiliation of poverty and ugliness' (p. 8). In his own words: 'though born poor in a working class neighborhood, I never knew what real misfortune was until I saw our chilling suburbs' (p. 8), in which there was to be found an injustice of 'climate', as he put it, which could also be interpreted as environment, specifically the built environment.

> 'Only the modern city', Hegel dares write, 'offers the mind a field in which it can become aware of itself'. We are thus living in the period of big cities. Deliberately, the world has been amputated of all that constitutes its permanence: nature, the sea, hilltops, evening mediation. *Consciousness* is to be found only in the streets, because *history* is to be found only in the streets—this is the edict [. . .]. *History* explains neither the natural universe that existed before it nor the beauty that exists *above* it. Hence it chose to be ignorant of them.
> (Camus, 1977a, p. 169, *italics* added)

The amputation of nature is a form of solitary confinement, the human removed from other life forms. Camus placed the beauty of the natural world above a form of reason that professed to transcend and at the same time order it through domination, a form of reason that could be read as congruent with Plumwood's concept of eco-irrationality or dominant logic. Camus' use of the word 'above' is not accidental, it speaks to one of the central themes of his philosophy: his criticism of all thought that seeks to transcend the limits of our shared existence in pursuit of ultimate meaning. The historical meat upon which Camus' lion feasts is the myth of reversal in the guise of history, a myth that seeks to denounce the Other to justify the violent excesses of the dominant order. In other words, the type of history to which Camus refers is a form

of means to end thinking. Violent means are often taken to be a necessary path to transcendental ends. Myths of reversal are used to justify the excesses of 'history's' past, present, and future. Such reversals not only act as justifications but also confuse our sense of what is right and wrong, the problematic importance of which will be explored further in the next chapter.

Like the lion devouring raw historical meat, Camus' (1977b) idea of the martyr, as the erasure of people to usher in a prophecy, a future utopian ideal, idealisation, or ideology, such as communism, is also a justification for violence. The future as well as the past can, thus, be weaponised.[4] Using Christianity as an example, Camus asserts that '[t]he Christians were the first to consider human life and the course of events as a history of which man gains his salvation or earns his punishment' (p. 157). And although the concept of the martyr does not require transcendence, it functions in the same way, that is, '[p]rophecy functions on a very long-term basis and has, as one of its properties, a characteristic which is the very source of strength of all religions: the impossibility of proof' (p. 157). History, religion, and ideologies such as communism are shown to share a common narrative, the march of progress towards an ineffable end. Both the martyr and the lion explain away the horror of suffer or the extinguishing life in the pursuit of a goal. Camus clarifies this further using the example of the character Heathcliff in the Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights*:

> Heathcliff, in *Wuthering Heights*, would kill everybody on earth in order to gain Cathy, but he would never think of saying that murder is reasonable or theoretically defensible. He would commit it; there his theory comes to a halt. This implies powerful love and it implies character. Since intense love is rare, such murders are uncommon, and they retain an air of waywardness. But as soon as a man, through lack of character, takes refuge in a doctrine, as soon as he makes his crime reasonable, it multiplies like Reason herself and assumes all the figures of the syllogism. It was unique like a cry; now it is universal like science. Yesterday, it was put on trial; today it is the law.
>
> (p. 11)

An identifying characteristic of the logic Camus criticises is the desire to do away with the pre-existing order of things and replace it with a universalising narrative, often hidden under the guise of morality. The doctrine of discovery, *Terra Nullius*, the consequent assimilation of Indigenous children, cemeteries, and the slaughterhouse are all examples of reason razing the Other and multiplying itself. It is not surprising, then, that like Plumwood, Camus locates the impetus for oppression in certain definitions of reason; for both philosophers the problematic forms of reasoning are any that can be used to justify atrocities. '[O]ur criminals', Camus writes, 'are no longer those helpless children who pleaded love as their excuse. On the contrary, they are adults, and they have a perfect alibi: philosophy, which can be used for anything, even

for transforming murderers into judges' (p. 11). The justification for suffer-
ing or murder built into certain philosophies,[5] Camus thought, negated those
philosophies, or as Tony Judt (1998) put it:

> [I]f Rousseau, Hegel, and Marx have forged a world in which the Terror
> and its successor terrors can be *justified*, then it is they who must answer
> for it—we cannot defend the history of the past centuries by reference
> to the claims such thinkers have made about the process of which it is
> but a part. The application of ethical criteria to regicide, terror, tor-
> ture *disqualifies* the regimes and theories that depend upon these means,
> whatever *story* they tell of themselves and whatever *Heavenly City* they
> promise in the earthly hereafter.
>
> (p. 95, *italics* added)

Due to first-hand experience and much reflection, Camus staunchly rejected
any theory, philosophy, religion, ideology, logic, morality, or narrative that
*justifies* the loss of lives. The value of life, Camus argued, should not be trans-
gressed, and if transgressed, never *justified*. Yet there are major moral theories
such as utilitarianism that claim otherwise. A common practice is to take moral
dilemmas as proof of the failure of a set ethical limit. Immanuel Kant's disa-
vowal of lying, for example, is often taken to be thoroughly refuted by his own
thought experiment in which a person with intent to kill comes to your door
and asks if you are harbouring his intended victim. You know that this person
is hiding in your house, and if you answer the potential murderer's question
honestly, this will lead to the person's death. However, if you lie, you will
be acting immorally, despite your good intentions. Generally, our intuitions
would tell us that lying in these circumstances is the best course of action,
and this is taken as evidence that moral universalism regarding rightful action,
without recourse to consequences, is, therefore, untenable.

Richard Routley (1984) argues against this practice in his defence of pacifism.
He notes that in the case of moral dilemmas, pacifism is charged with moral inad-
equacy by consequentialist ethics as it cannot, so the objection goes, act in a way
that is consistent with both its principles and the prevention of greater violence
from occurring. Take his example of 'Pedro and Jim, where Pedro volunteers to
call off his firing squad about to shoot several captives if Jim shoots one of them'
(p. 124). According to utilitarian ethics, Jim *ought* to shoot one to save the rest,
but according to pacifism Jim *ought not* to commit violence. The charge against
pacifism, Routley argues, fails, on the grounds that the transgression of a moral
principle does not call for the abandonment of that principle. According to Routley,

> [w]hat a comprehensive pacifist does *not* do, unless he wants coherence
> trouble, is to take the inadequate utilitarian line of trying to explain
> moral dilemmas away, as if they never occurred . . ., as if all obligations
> were prima facie, negotiable, etc. No, *the conflicting obligations stand*.
>
> (p. 124)

For Camus (1977b), either action is impermissible; we must still act, but in doing so we have a responsibility to maintain awareness of our transgressions, of our 'human weaknesses and of [our] injustices' (p. 171).[6] Once we explain these away by recourse to a theory or doctrine, we are in danger of multiplying them. On this point, Plumwood (2002) concurs. She says, one 'has to concede injustice in order to effect a sufficient change to provide any guarantee that the same approach will not immediately be repeated. . . . That's why it's so important to be able to say "Sorry"' (p. 116). Sorry does not have to be seen always as an admission of guilt, but can also be a recognition of suffering, which is a necessary first step towards action aimed at eliminating the recurrence of suffering. Given the example outlined earlier, even if it is *preferable* to act in a certain way (e.g., Jim shoots a captive), it does not follow that one *ought* to (e.g., it remains the case that Jim ought not to act violently), and while he may choose what he believes to be the lesser evil, it does not follow that his act is therefore moral. As Routley (1984) says, 'utilitarianism, and consequentialist approaches more generally, have made it seem as if no deontic principle were firm, but all are provisional. This is entirely mistaken' (p. 123). What is at stake is our very ability to comprehend moral transgression.

The Stolen Generations epitomise the necessity of saying sorry, as well as the responsibility of recognising and respecting limits and making sure that they are not transgressed again, that they are not multiplied. A common practice, according to the *Bringing Them Home* Report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1997), 'was simply to remove the child forcibly, often in the absence of the parent but sometimes even by taking the child from the mother's arms' (p. 5). This nationwide practice was undertaken mainly for reasons of assimilation, as the process of consultation and research conducted by the Commission has revealed. The report highlights that 'the predominant aim of Indigenous child removals was the absorption or assimilation of the children into the wider, non-Indigenous, community so that their unique cultural values and ethnic identities would disappear, giving way to models of Western culture' (p. 237). One of the Report's recommendations is 'acknowledgement and apology' (p. 254). The Australian government's apology, delivered by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on 13 February 2008, speaks to the heart of the matter: 'We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians. A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again' (n.p). However, not once does Rudd directly acknowledge assimilation, and in the case of the Intervention, Australia at the time was failing to prevent the reoccurrence of, as Rudd promised, 'laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians' (n.p). In addition, by 2016 the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care (OOHC) in Australia had increased,

with Indigenous children placed in OOHC at a much higher rate than non-Indigenous children:

> while the number per 1000 of the non-Indigenous population in care has remained relatively constant over the last five years (now 5.5 per 1,000), the rate for Indigenous children and young people has increased steadily since 2006 from 24.1 to 52.5 per 1,000 children.
>
> (McDowall, 2016, p. 6)

An apology requires a halt to transgressions, otherwise it is simply another myth of reversal. For example, for you to believe I am sorry for hitting you, I need to first stop hitting you. We all know that limits can be crossed, that they are not impervious to trespass, because if there were no fear of trespass, there would be no need for limits in the first place. The very possibility of violence, epistemic or otherwise, is what calls forth the limit. There would be no laws against murder if murder were not an option. These are truisms, but ones that are often obscured in the same way moral limits are.

To return to Routley, now named Sylvan (1986), I do not wish to paint him as a firm believer in deontology. In fact, his view is much more nuanced: the positioning of concern in consequentialist ethics in *consequences* is, he thinks, to the neglect of *intent*, and vice versa; the focus of concern in deontological ethics being on intentions is to the neglect of consequences. A satisfactory ethic must take adequate account of both: 'Ethical theories which move away from common-sense positions and erroneously try to concentrate the badness of the process-product whole in one of the components, have a difficult time explaining the ordinary contrast between attempted and successful violence' (p. 34). The concept of epistemic violence provides a way of considering both intent and consequences, or in Sylvan's terms, to attend to the process-product whole rather than focusing exclusively on one of the components. In the case of Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations, the intent, which is assimilation through the creation of legislation, was acknowledged in the *Bringing Them Home* Report, but, as I explained above, was not directly mention. Thus, the harm to First Nations peoples as knowledge holders, that is, the act of epistemic violence, was not recognised as part of the government's apology. While Rudd acknowledged the outcome of the legislation, namely, the theft of children and the resulting pain and suffering caused by such action, his failure to recognise the epistemic violence of assimilation, as the Intervention illustrated, resulted in Australia once again failing to prevent a reoccurrence, history repeating itself.

To get to the core of epistemic violence, a greater understanding of the ways in which it reproduces itself, as I have argued both Camus and Plumwood provide, is necessary. Thus, in the next section, I once more turn to Camus, but this time, to illustrate how epistemic violence is inherent in the concept of truth as absolute (expressed variously as unvarying, permanent, independently true for all people, or true regardless of parameters or context to peel back another guise of dominant logic).

**Not 'Truth' but truths**

Camus (1977a) rejected the title of existentialist, which, he said, went beyond 'lucid reason noting its limits' (p. 49). Nevertheless, when he said '[t]here is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide' (p. 11), he posed one of the twentieth century's best-known existentialist problems, namely, '[j]udging whether life is or is not worth living' (p. 11). But it was also an epistemic and moral problem. Because of the severity of the consequences the answer to this question entailed, Camus was determined to follow the logic that led from the recognition of the absurd to the act of taking one's own life. 'Dying voluntarily', he said, 'implies that you have recognized, even instinctively, the ridiculous character of that habit, the absence of profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation and the uselessness of suffering' (p. 13). In his novel, *The Rebel*, the reference to the 'uselessness of suffering' is embodied in a passage that Camus (1977b) quotes from Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*: 'If the suffering of children', says Ivan Karamazov, 'serves to complete the sum of suffering necessary for the acquisition of *truth*, I affirm from now onward that *truth* is not worth such a price' (p. 51, *italics* added). For Camus and Dostoevsky, the idea of an afterlife and Christianity's requirement of faith in the goodness of God to obtain entrance to that afterlife, even in the face of the world's evils, exemplified by the suffering of children, implicitly requires 'the acceptance of mystery and of evil and resignation to injustice' (p. 51). Neither Camus nor Dostoevsky would allow the problem of evil, in this case, the suffering of children, to be so easily explained away by the story of God's will. Theirs is a very personal rejection of universal or absolute morality, justified by a belief in something greater, and along with it a rejection of absolute truth. Camus asserted the need to revolt against such truth and those who teach it. He thought we should revolt against another's beliefs construed as truth, if those beliefs do little to help ease suffering or worse, cause, promote, or prolong it. The myth of *Terra Nullius* is a prime example of this kind of belief, which underpinned the dominant logic of colonisation in Australia, and, subsequently, its dominant political system of liberal democracy. Yet, just as Camus does not wish to do away with all reason, revolt does not call for the abandonment of all truths.

According to Camus, '[t]he unfortunate thing is that we are in the age of ideologies and of ideologies which are totalitarian—that is, which are sufficiently sure of themselves, of their imbecilic reason or of *their short-lived truth*, to see the world's salvation in their own domination' (p. 535, *italics* added). The concept of truths as human constructs echoes through *The Myth of Sisyphus*, in which Camus (1977a) says: 'This heart within me I can feel, and I judge that it exists. This world I can touch, and I likewise judge that it exists. There ends all my knowledge, and the rest is construction' (p. 24). To Camus, truths are constructed, which, I take to mean, contingent and contextual. He writes: 'Galileo, who held a scientific truth of great importance, abjured it with the greatest ease as soon as it endangered his life. In a certain sense, he did

right. That truth was not worth the stake' (p. 11). In other words, *the author-ity of truth should not supersede the limit of life*.

Constructed truths are limited in scope, as they dismiss what they cannot ever possibly understand, which is 'everything'. To quote Camus: 'That univer-sal reason, practical or ethical, that determinism, those categories that explain everything are enough to make a decent man laugh. They have nothing to do with the mind. They negate its profound truth, which is to be enchained' (p. 26). Philosophical suicide is the result of transgressing human epistemic limits. Similarly, Routley (2010) held that the embedded finite nature of humans, who inevitably make up a limited part of a greater whole, means that truth as we understand it, is also limited; the 'universe is vast; knowledge-acquiring creatures inevitably constitute only a small and bounded part of it; so inevitably the knowledge they can pool is partial, is always incomplete' (p. 116). Moreover, '[t]ruth always exceeds what is ascertained by limited means, including epistemic means' (p. 122).

Speaking of science but sharing tones with Michèle Le Dœuff's (2014) assertion that the imagery 'occupies the place of theories impossible' (p. 5), in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus (1977a) says 'you tell me of an invisible plan-etary system in which electrons gravitate around a nucleus. You explain this world to me with an image. I realize then that you have been reduced to poetry: I shall never know' (p. 25). For Camus, images populate our theories, filling in the gaps of our uncertainty. To recognise these for what they are, not to destroy or do away with them, but to better appreciate them as limits to knowledge, as questions unanswered, and perhaps, needing no answer, to recognise them as philosophy, is an act of creative revolt. Lucidity is, in part, making the uncomfortable thought of the unknown comfortable. Each of us constructs our own universes, but on this view, there are no strict boundaries between them besides the ones we ourselves enforce. To quote Camus again:

> It is clear that in this way I am defining a method. But it is also evident that that method is one of analysis and not of knowledge. For meth-ods imply metaphysics; unconsciously they disclose conclusions that they often claim not to know yet. Similarly, the last pages of a book are already contained in the first pages. Such a link is inevitable. The method defined here acknowledges the feeling that all true knowledge is impossible. Solely appearances can be enumerated and the climate make itself felt.
>
> (p. 18)

His words somewhat echo Routley's (2010) that the embedded nature of the inquirer as a limited part of a greater whole means truth is limited because the 'universe is vast; knowledge-acquiring creatures inevitably constitute only a small and bounded part of it; so inevitably the knowledge they can pool is partial, is always incomplete' (p. 116). Moreover, '[t]ruth always exceeds what is ascertained by limited means, including epistemic means. There is no (epis-temic) method' (p. 122).

Both Routley and Camus compare the moderation of the Greeks, and their respect for limits, to the modern Western philosophical obsession with knowledge that knows no bounds, that can penetrate any mystery it chooses to turn its gaze upon. Routley (2010) explains how the view of truth as unbounded has led to the view of nature as also without limits, that is, the view of nature as a limitless resource open to unrestricted human consumption, devoid of moral consideration. In doing so, he problematises the

> modern view of unrestricted progress, of unlimited opportunities for humans, and of unimpeded domination of nature. Impressive advances in science and technology encouraged the (erroneous) idea that limits could be removed, an idea reinforced by theoretical presumptions as to the solvability of every problem, and the availability of a method—'the' scientific method—by which everything could be known.
>
> (p. 108)

Camus locates the source of the unimpeded domination of nature in that mode of thinking for which the question of life is not open-ended. Life is not a repeatable experiment; the aim is not certainty. What it is to live is not something to be defined; life is the only answer to life, knowledge holds few certainties, and the natural world is beyond the limits of our complete understanding of it. This is the state of affairs described by Camus' notion of the absurd. To attempt to transgress the limits of life by means of theories of absolute certainty is an imposition of order. The finite cannot hope to know the infinite, and the hope to know leads to the desire to unify the infinite into a finite concept, that is, to anthropomorphise the world. 'Understanding the world for a human', he says, 'is reducing it to the human, stamping it with his seal. The cat's universe is not the universe of the anthill. The truism "All thought is anthropomorphic" has no other meaning' (p. 23).

Plumwood argues that if we wish to avoid suicide at the level of the human species, it is necessary to instantiate ecological rationality, to move away from the dominant logic of liberalism's ecological irrationality. Deborah Bird Rose (2004) reaches a similar conclusion. Drawing from Gregory Bateson's concept of ecology, she argues that the 'unit of survival is not the individual or the species, but it is the organism-and-its-environment in relationship. It follows from this that an organism that deteriorates its environment commits suicide' (p. 188). Our belief in our independence from land, the dominant logic inherent in the liberal conception of humans as rational, autonomous individuals, is indeed suicidal. As Plumwood (2007) puts it in the context of Australia, the 'idea that land recognition is an inessential component of Australian identity does not disturb the dominant culture's illusions of independence from the land and corresponding sense that it is incidental to its life' (p. 63). Conversely, recognition of human life's dependence on a complex, living, and continually changing environment signals a shift away from 'the concept of a universal knowledge', certainty, or absolute truth, for if 'one is a part of the system the

whole remains outside the possibility of one's comprehension' (p. 188). Viewing humans as part of nature, rather than separate from it, opens the way for an embedded, ethical self and a social order based on respect for limitations.

## Conclusion

What are the implications of the discussion here on the environmental crisis we face and what are the implications for education? Humans rely on transportation, housing, and food production to survive; they are part of our regular routines along with various other products, such as household appliances, mobile phones, laptops, clothing, and grooming products. Almost every sector of industry that is responsible for the production of these items, for our personal use, is contributing to climate change and ecological breakdown. Further, government regulation of industry and the economy is reliant on the political party that is elected, and who is elected is often determined by adversarial media-driven election campaigns to which industry makes substantial financial donations. During these campaigns, we are both citizen and consumer. This complex arrangement of systems makes it difficult to point the finger at those ecological responsible. Does the blame lie with individuals? Industry? Governments? All three are connected. At all levels our actions as humans are not separable from their effects on the environment. Humans are a part of nature, not apart from it. While we may bear no malice towards nature, nature bears the brunt of our beliefs regarding how we ought to live, despite whether those beliefs are derived through reflection or acquired habit. Collectively, we are instrumental in perpetuating the logic of domination, which turns Earth into a resource for our benefit. We instrumentalise the planet by carving up the common ground on which we all stand and turning it into an economic product—nature as real estate, which is the foundation of a capitalist economy, and we Other those whose relationships with nature are not premised on domination.

We are all part of a complex arrangement of human-constructed systems, which in turn construct our personal, social, and political identities through institutions such as family, religion, law, the economy, government, and education. All but the latter are informal means of educating children and adolescents. Formal education, on the other hand, is a systematised form of learning, designed in part to prepare children to take their place in these human-constructed systems and in doing so to perpetuate them. This makes it susceptible to government agendas through education policy, curricula, and teacher preparation programmes. It is no coincidence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their families through government policies; generations were denied access to informal education, to their culture and language and were punished if they rebelled. As well as being physically violent, such actions can also be described as epistemically violent, geared towards the creation of a single identity—a colonial identity that is historically British, an identity that stripped away tens of thousands of years of

culture, kinship, language, knowledge, and connection with Land and Country. Education, therefore, needs to facilitate the purposeful engagement in identity formation towards pluralistic, intercultural conceptions of citizenship.

> This is especially important, as in modern liberal-democratic nation-states, national identity is not, to varying degrees, inclusive of all the state's citizens and is structurally (i.e., institutionally) privileging of members of the dominant group and culture and, therefore, unable to meet Indigenous peoples' and other marginalised groups' needs for individual and communal identity reproduction, including ways of knowing, being, and doing.
>
> (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 5)

Given the Indigenous connect to land, and the fact that humans are *a part* of nature, not *apart* from it, education also needs to address Plumwood's concerns regarding dualisms, heavenism, and tidiness as these go beyond the bounds of ecological reason and enforce on consciousness and the earth, stark separations, which form the basis for justifications of epistemic and physical violence. We heard from Sylvan that in the search for unbounded truth, the view that everything can be known without limit allows for 'unrestricted progress' driven by humans as masters of Earth which has caused untold environmental degradation. Indeed, Rose went so far as to say that such views are environmentally suicidal. Conversely, understanding the self as situated, embedded within nature, is understanding that truth, too, has its limits, a necessary step in developing ecological rationality. Education's role in identity formation must, therefore, extend to the development of eco-citizen identity, that is, to develop in students an awareness of their ecological relationship to land and the interplay between their actions and their impacts on the environment.

These issues will be explored further in Chapter 7. In the next chapter, I extend on Camus' critique of history by bringing in Rose's critique of time and the part it plays in our notions of progress. I trace the logic of domination through the narrative of progress, mentioned in this chapter by Sylvan, into schools where it has largely shaped the way we look at education in the West. I also look at some of the ways epistemic violence is present in notions of childhood. If undoing the logic of domination is an important part of creating ecologically rational people, as I have argued, then undoing it in schools becomes vital to creating an ecologically rational society.

## Notes

1  From: http://155.187.2.69/biodiversity/publications/articles/cemetary.html
2  See: www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/tv/should-children-visit-slaughter-houses-14863219 and www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/the-primary-school-teaching-about-pig-rearing-is-right-children-must-understand-meat-production-8529524.html.

A school in Norway that took kindergarteners 'on a trip to a reindeer slaughter-house, part of a program to teach them about the ways of the Sami, an indigenous people in Scandinavia who herd the animals' was met with outrage. See: www. nytimes.com/2017/01/13/world/europe/norway-school-trip-reindeer-slaughterhouse.html

3   For more information, see: https://faunalytics.org/global-animal-slaughter-statistics-charts-2022-update/

4   For example, '[b]oth the Soviet and the German totalitarian regimes destroyed the freedom of historical inquiry by imposing political restrictions upon research and prescribing in minute detail a politically acceptable version of the past. History became a political weapon, the historian a warrior at "the historical front"' (Pokrovsky, Frank & Von Müller, 1970, p. 329).

5   Camus (1977a) lists the following philosophers in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, a list he expands considerably in *The Rebel*: 'From Jaspers to Heidegger, from Kierkegaard to Chestov, from the phenomenologists to Scheler' (pp. 27–28)

6   Camus' philosophical thoughts were also informed by his experience as a journalist. Speaking of the French use of torture in his birthplace of Algeria, Camus (2013) stresses that 'we must refuse to justify these methods [torture] on any ground whatsoever, including effectiveness. Once one begins to justify them, even indirectly, no rules or values remain' (p. 26).

# 5 History

## Lessons in time and identity formation

### Introduction

Opinions abound about what should be included in the history curriculum, its role in the humanities and social sciences, and its purpose in education. Contemporary debates have brought to public attention, and raised scholarly concerns over, ideological tensions, contradictions, and conflicts. For example, in 2021, as part of the Australian Curriculum review, then Minister for Education, Alan Tudge, rejected the first draft of the history curriculum, calling for 'a positive, optimistic view of Australian history' and more content about Australia's 'Western heritage'. On the one hand, statements such as these, without knowing all the relevant facts, can appear to be mere disagreements over finding a balance between historical content and understanding. On the other hand, as described in the previous chapter, they can be understood as attempts to control narratives of the past to justify the political actions of the dominant culture. If we add more relevant facts, we can see more clearly what the Minister for Education had in mind. When asked, in an interview with *Hack* presenter Avani Dias,[1] about the hurt and trauma experienced by First Nations peoples, this was his response:

> Of course we should be teaching an accurate version of our history; it is important to reflect upon the Indigenous perspective along the way, and that has been incorporated into the draft. That's a good thing. My overall view, though, is that the balance is out of whack in terms of downplaying modern Australia, downplaying Western civilization, downplaying our liberal democracy, which has created so much wealth and opportunity.

The justification for his views comes with a contradiction and reveals his intent: 'I want to make sure there's a balance, but I want people to come out having learnt about a country with a love of it, rather than a hatred'. In this sense, the role of history in the curriculum is a highly politicised issue within a spurious educational debate; the concern is educational only insofar as inculcation takes place in the classroom, through assimilationist pedagogies in a system of compulsory education. As part of the colonising narrative, governments

have sought to use history education as an instrument for disseminating a specific set of values and beliefs as central to identity formation. Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing are often denied a central role in this process of identity formation and nation building, a denial that was once left to church missions in Australia that were often tasked with 'educating' the Stolen Generations those forcibly removed from their family and culture by government agencies.

Recall that Camus thought the lies of history are the source of strength for religion, as he thought controlling the narrative past shapes the meaning of the present and paves the path for domination into the future. Rose (2004) emphasises the importance of linear time in this recipe of domination, in that the past-present-future linear conception of time 'provides a template for a great deal of colonising thought' (p. 151). The Western conception of time as linear has been 'the basis of intellectual and religious thought for many centuries' and is essential for 'the smooth functioning of a complex industrial society in which the actions of large groups of people need to be coordinated, so that factories, shops, businesses, offices, railways, airlines and traffic flow can all operate on an identical time schedule' (Helman, 2005, n.p.). In other words, time is an instrument for regulating economic life, central to social and political life. However, there are multiple ways of thinking about, and teaching, a fundamental civilisational structuring concept such as time. Discussing the time orientation of the Yarralin People,[2] Rose (2004) demonstrates this:

> We here now come after or are behind our ancestors who came before us. Our descendants are the 'behind mob' relative to us. We precede them, they follow along behind. And the whole of ordinary life can be understood collectively as a 'behind mob'—we all follow along behind the Dreamings. This is a temporal orientation that is based on sequence.
>
> (p. 152)

Rose picks up on the Western conception of time as 'set within a Christian pattern: it is teleological, this present is imperfect, the future will be better. And the relative evaluation of the future as better necessarily implies that now is worse, and that the past is even worse than now' (p. 152). For Camus (1977b) the future becomes a utopian vision that does not bear the burden of proof but instead requires a leap of faith to realise it. The Western conception of time moves away from the realities of the past, creating a stark break between it and the present, and in doing so, disallows the movement of past realities into the now and the future. Relegating wrongs to history denies their present-day realities, in a sense finalising them while at the same time, creating a fictitious future, or as Rose (2004) writes, 'the fantasised utopia of the future is a key narrative for a certain type of triumphal history' (p. 152). The relegation of colonisation to the past by many is an attempt to deny its current day occurrences. The Stolen Generations, for example,

is taken to be a past wrong, even though the rate of Aboriginal children in 'care' is increasing.

A linear progression is evident also in our conception of childhood and by extension the development of self, which *is* at the heart of education. Linear accounts of personhood are marked through exclusions, or put another way, are premised on what they are not, creating dualisms, such as child/adult, savage/civilised, and are accordingly part of the logic of domination which permeates formal curricula as well as the hidden curriculum. This raises questions for curriculum design, such as what should be included in the study of history?

I start this chapter by drawing on James Baldwin's speech to educators on the topic of structural racism. Socio-political systems like the USA, he says, are built on the dehumanisation of Other, and this has implications for education, as it is not the Other that must change, but the system that engages in othering. I then draw on Lisa Guenther's research on solitary confinement to outline the role punishment plays in structuring such societies, by linking punishment to education and identity formation. I conclude by responding to the 'utopia' objection, a justification often given for maintaining rather than disrupting harmful educational practices. Next, I discuss epistemic violence, which is at the core of othering and, therefore, impacts the students' abilities to learn. To the ongoing violence against Indigenous peoples, the ongoing dehumanisation, and the denial of history perpetrated by colonisers, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) argues that to 'acquiesce is to lose ourselves entirely and implicitly agree with all that has been said about us' (p. 4). The acquiescence Smith describes is tantamount to relinquishing the capacity for self-development, which, educationally, amounts to loss of autonomy, insofar as identity is shaped by 'all that has been said about us' or put another way, the narratives that are created in service of the coloniser.

## Colonial dehumanisation

Jean-François Lyotard (2013) argues that

> beneath the name 'reality,' the unquestioned assumption is made that something is first given, in whatever complexified modes of apprehension and explanation it may be construed. If there is not that Other that gives the given, how can the construct be tested or verified, even provisionally?
>
> (p. 119)

Unfortunately, our constructed reality is too often verified not on that which gives the given, but on the distance between our reality and the Other. The terms of reality are, to a considerable extent, defined by who is excluded or marginalised and, thus, who lies outside of, or is absent from, the social, political, economic, or cultural sphere (including education), which brings the Other

into half being within the dominant culture. Identities not thought to belong to the dominant reality become 'the civil and social dead [who] are excluded from full participation in life, like ghosts who can still speak and act but whose speech and actions no longer make an impact on the world' (Guenther, 2013, p. xxvii). Those who are busy defining realities create a problem for the Other by deeming the Other to be a problem—a myth of reversal. However, the Other is not the problem and, thus, the goal is not to 'help' the Other nor to turn the Other into the one othering. Rather, the problem lies with those who define reality through exclusion and, thus, the solution is to change the way such realities are defined.

Speaking on the topic of structural racism endemic in colonised countries—many of whose original inhabitants were also felled by the doctrine of discovery, that which was and is used to justify the colonisation of Australia, the USA, and Canada, among other countries—Baldwin (1985) recounts his experience with the socio-political structures of the USA from the perspective of an African American. I quote him here at length:

> Every street boy—and I was a street boy, so I know—looking at the society which has produced him, looking at the standards of that society which are not honored by anybody, looking at your churches and the government and the politicians, understands that this structure is operated for someone else's benefit—not for his. And there's no reason in it for him. If he is really cunning, really ruthless, really strong—and many of us are—he becomes a kind of criminal. He becomes a kind of criminal because that's the only way he can live. Harlem and every ghetto in this city—every ghetto in this country—is full of people who live outside the law. They wouldn't dream of calling a policeman. They wouldn't, for a moment, listen to any of those professions of which we are so proud on the Fourth of July. They have turned away from this country forever and totally. They live by their wits and really long to see the day when the entire structure comes down. The point of all this is that black men were brought here as a source of cheap labor. They were indispensable to the economy. In order to justify the fact that men were treated as though they were animals, the white republic had to brainwash itself into believing that they were, indeed, animals and deserved to be treated like animals. Therefor [*sic*] it is almost impossible for any Negro child to discover anything about his *actual history*. The reason is that this 'animal,' once he suspects his own worth, once he starts believing that he is a man, has begun to attack the entire power structure. This is why America has spent such a long time keeping the Negro in his place. What I am trying to suggest to you is that it was not an accident, it was not an act of God, it was not done by well-meaning people muddling into something which they didn't understand. It was a deliberate policy hammered into place in order to make money from black flesh.
>
> (p. 1, *italics* added)

Baldwin uttered these words in an address to educators. He wanted them to understand that racism is indeed structural, in the same way that Wolfe wanted us to understand that colonisation is structural, and in the same way that Plumwood wanted us to understand that environmental degradation is structural and that all are intertwined. Baldwin wanted educators to understand that he is not the 'problem', rather their projections of what he is onto him are. He says:

> In order for me to live, I decided very early that some mistake had been made somewhere. I was not a 'nigger' even though you called me one. But if I was a 'nigger' in your eyes, there was something about you— there was something you needed. I had to realize when I was very young that I was none of those things I was told I was.
>
> (p. 3)

The logic of domination is woven into our institutions, it shapes our social practices, and to a significant extent it structures the way colonial identities see the world and everyone and everything in it. The racist individual living within the structure is taught to be epistemically violent towards Other, by internalising the logic of domination and myths of reversal, by committing philosophical suicide. These myths of reversal limit not only the Other, but in a different way, they also limit the oppressor's self-identity. Moreton-Robinson (2015) argues similarly,

> that patriarchal white sovereignty as a regime of power deploys a discourse of pathology as a means to subjugate and discipline Indigenous people to be good citizens, and that the tactics and strategies deployed within this race war reveal its own pathology.
>
> (p. 155)

Identity is wrapped up in a fictitious history, a history that simultaneously omits past violence against the Other, and the role played by the Other in shaping that history. To the denial of history, as prevalent in the USA as it is in Australia, Baldwin (1985) had this to say:

> It is not really a 'Negro revolution' that is upsetting the country. What is upsetting the country is a sense of its own identity. If, for example, one managed to change the curriculum in all the schools so that Negroes learned more about themselves and their real contributions to this culture, you would be liberating not only Negroes, you'd be liberating white people who know nothing about their own history. And the reason is that if you are compelled to lie about one aspect of anybody's history, you must lie about it all. If you have to lie about my real role here, if you have to pretend that I hoed all that cotton

> just because I loved you, then you have done something to yourself.
> *You are mad*.
>
> (p. 3, *italics* added)

Here Baldwin is reversing a myth of reversal, pushing back against the creation of the norm in the image of the coloniser, by showing the lie at the heart of dehumanisation. To turn back to Australia, the ongoing controversy over the date of Australia Day/Invasion Day is an example of coloniser identity denying its own violent history. Australia day is currently held on 26 January, the anniversary of the arrival in 1788 of the first British fleet and the subsequent claiming of Australia in the name of the British crown by Governor Arthur Phillip. However, the legitimacy of such a claim has been called into question, and it is more apt to conceive of the event as the invasion of Australia as previously discussed, hence invasion day. Baldwin argues that just as racism is structural so, too, is colonial identity. Understanding racism as structural should provoke us to try to understand our own identities as structural.[3] To do so, we need to look at the way identity is formed in the culture in which we find ourselves embedded. To this end, I turn to Lisa Guenther's (2013) book, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives*, which traces the development of solitary confinement and the multiple historical arguments given in its favour in the USA.

The structures of prisons and the arguments for them have changed over time, for which Guenther provides a detailed and eye-opening history that is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this book. However, she poses questions raised by the effects of solitary confinement that are valuable for understanding the links between time, dehumanisation, discipline, punishment, slavery, society, and the self. How, and why, we punish Others is sometimes a reflection of societal values, and sometimes an influencing force, in a feedback loop that 'affects all of us who live in a society in which black, brown, and poor people of all races are criminalized and isolated in prisons for the stake of someone else's security and prosperity'(p. 253). The how and why can also tell us something about the construction of self, and our processes of learning, by presenting us with the negation of learning, that is, the destruction of self. This exclusion from personhood happens in two ways, which she defines as the social death and the civil death.

> Social death is the effect of a (social) practice in which a person or group of people is excluded, dominated, or humiliated to the point of becoming dead to the rest of society. Although such people are physically alive, their lives no longer bear a social meaning; they no longer count as lives that matter.
>
> (p. xx)

The socially dead have no moral standing, they do not matter in any meaningful way, and it does not matter what is done to them, as is also the case for the

civilly dead. Civil death is a legal fiction describing those who have, by law, been positioned as dead. Their body, she says,

> may be alive and their mind sharp, but they have been deprived of the legal status of a person with civil rights such as the rights to own or bequeath property, to vote, to bring a legal case to court, and so on.
>
> (p. xviii)

Guenther argues that prisoners can be positioned as civilly and socially dead, an argument that I think can be extended to colonial treatment of Aboriginal peoples in Australia, certainly prior to their being counted as citizens, and to an extent through the ongoing denial of sovereignty and obstinate forms of dehumanisation, such as the infantilising cashless welfare card.[4] As previously covered, during the invasion of Australia, Indigenous peoples were, as Russell Hogg (2001) describes, often thought of as 'by nature inferior, uncultivated, slave to their passions and must be subject to forms of disciplinary control appropriate to their condition and level of understanding, namely physical punishments that could be promptly administered' (p. 360). Punishment, and by extension the judicial system, plays an important structural role in colonisation. Like Guenther, Hogg argues that punishment 'is a means of marking the cultural limits of membership of a civilized community and the entitlements to civic recognition, citizenship and rights (including rights to land) that follow from it' (p. 361).

From the early 1900s to the 1960s, as discussed previously, the abduction, or 'the forced removal', of Aboriginal children, was a widespread policy. Indigenous peoples were not only denied rights of citizenship but also rights to their own children; the right to raise them and the right to cultural reproduction were forcibly taken away in an act of premeditated cultural genocide (or ethnocide). According to the Australian Human Rights Commission, during this period, an estimate of one in three or one in ten Aboriginal children were taken from their families. These figures are in stark contrast to the one in three hundred removals of white children during the same period. Hogg notes that the 'forcible taking of a child from its parent has generally been regarded with such moral repugnance as to be unthinkable' (p. 365), and yet in the case of Aboriginal children, a moral myth of reversal took place, turning an unthinkable act, perpetrated towards a few humans, into an almost moral duty to civilise a people dehumanised and turned into a savage, animalistic subject, 'bereft of the "normal" (white, European) structures of psychological affects and refined sensibilities' (p. 365). Here we see normalising, moralising, and othering as different sides of the same coin, that is, the same system of oppression. Attuning our moral sensibilities to some and not to others is a feature of colonisation and a form of epistemic violence.

Guenther (2013) argues that means of control, such as social and civil death and, particularly, solitary confinement, are aimed at the very thing that makes us human but also animal, namely, our relationships to the earth,

others, family, and the future. Were we not relational beings, such means of control would fail. Considering the consistently observed effects of solitary confinement on inmates over a period of multiple centuries, Guenther asks an important question in relation to identity: 'Who are we, such that we can become unhinged from ourselves by being separated from others?' (p. 3). She speaks of the extreme disentanglement of identity from environment that is solitary confinement. This disentanglement amounts to a disassembly and eventual disintegration of self. If the absence of connection equals the absence of self-identity, then connection is at the very least a necessary condition for the coherent existence of self.

In *The Plague*, Camus (1948) writes of those suffering under the order imposed by the authorities in response to the outbreak of the plague: 'they were wasting away emotionally as well as physically' (p. 148). Why? The duration of isolation, which 'by the end of their long sundering they had also lost the power of imagining the intimacy that once was theirs, or understanding what it can be to live with someone whose life is wrapped up in yours' (p. 149). This is the disintegration of relationships with others, including non-humans. In both prison and isolation, the absence of connections to others is made worse, by the unescapable nature of mechanistic time, controlled by an authority greater than your own. This terrible duration is exemplified in capital punishment, the power of the State to name the time of your death and make you count the seconds until its occurrence. Thought of the future turns to despair with the removal of the possibilities for life that it would hold under other circumstances, that is, with the removal of the unknown. Imposition of the knowledge of the time and place of your execution inflicts on one consciousness great suffering.

Consciousness plays a large role in Camus' philosophy for it is consciousness that makes the absurd possible, the meeting of consciousness with the world. Were we not conscious and relational beings, the absurd would not exist. Were we not conscious and relational beings, we would not experience suffering from solitary confinement or have an understanding of the surety of our death. The administrative stroke of the pen following the judge's sentence of death, rather than the executioner's blade, is the more terrible of the two precisely because of the duration of isolation ordered, which is accompanied by the awareness of the end of future possibilities—it is the severing of relationality. As Camus (1949) puts it,

> When one wants to unify the whole world in the name of an ideology, there is no other way but to make this world as fleshless, as blind, and as deaf as the ideology itself. There is no other way but to cut the roots which bind man to life and nature.
>
> (p. 536)

The severing of relationality can be accomplished not only through physical means but conceptual ones, such as the notion of the atomistic liberal

individual. Such a notion of self is 'idealist and abstract—a category conceived as free of all constraints on action and endowed by nature with certain inalienable rights' (Hall, 1986, p. 39). Camus' notion of self, by contrast, is more in line with Guenther's.

Referring to actors on the stage, Camus (1977a) invites us to imagine ourselves as part of the audience. After watching a hundred plays, the same actor in a hundred different roles, we are asked to question whether we think we know something about the actor. The answer Camus thinks is yes: 'a man defines himself by his make-believe as well as by his sincere impulses' (p. 10). The act is also part of the actor's life. Whether we mean them or not, our actions, our habits, our relationship with the world around us become us. On stage delivering the lines of the script we may be reluctant to say that the actors are 'being themselves'. We would likely think of the actors as removed from their authentic selves; they are after all acting, playing a part, indulging in make-believe, and pretending. We may be tempted to slice this portion of their identity out and call it fiction, but can a person ever be removed from themselves? Can we view a person's life as if controlled by a stopwatch that can be stopped and started based on our definition of fiction and non-fiction? The notion that fiction is somehow cordoned off from reality reveals something about the absurd. To Camus, there is no such thing as an authentic self, or if there is, it is ever changing. An essentialist notion of the self that progresses in a linear fashion is another fiction, albeit an influential one. It is a fiction grown in Western conceptions of childhood and follows along the same lines as Western conceptions of 'progress' and time.

Just as progress is measured as a movement away from nature, so, too, is adulthood measured against its movement away from childhood. Murris (2014) notes that teachers' attitudes towards childhood largely still follow a theory of developmental progression which claims that

> for 'healthy' intellectual development children need to control their emotions and other 'natural,' 'animalistic' impulses through catharsis in order to mature and grow up into rational individuals. This still prevalent recapitulation theory presupposes that the development of the individual (universal) child mirrors the development of the species from 'savage' to 'civilised'.
>
> (p. 158)

Under this theory of development, the control of emotions is seen to be a mark of the civilised, fully human (recall Plato's notion of the tripartite soul). Those who fail to exercise 'self-control' are labelled irrational, and uncivilised and such definitions are then used to justify the domination and discipline of children in the same way they are used to instrumentalise the environment and adults who do not fit the dominant paradigm. Indeed, when adult behaviour falls outside the realm of societal normalcy, the adult is often said to be 'irrational', or interchangeably, they are labelled as acting like a child.

We commonly see childhood in much the same way that we see the actor, as a preliminary stage to adulthood, a preparation for life, which is to be overcome in order to be deemed 'fully human'. We view not only children but also our own childhood in this way when we say things to ourselves, such as, I was never that young, that dumb, that little, that dependent. We view childhood merely as something that we need to go through to emerge fully grown, the finished adult product, independent and individual, rather than seeing it as a continuity of self, of existence. The belief that we can step out from our lives, from the development of self, equates with the belief that some things do not count, that some actions are important, while others are not. The time I graduated from college was important, the time I saw a butterfly, perhaps not. We all value different events in our lives differently, and to some perhaps seeing a butterfly was a seminal moment; however, collectively, the events which count, which must be valued, and must be ordered and recorded, are those that are dictated to us by our socio-political systems beginning with education, both informally through family and formally through schooling. A written history of our lives must be created for us to apply for citizenship, to drive a car, enter the workforce, pay our taxes, be granted entrance to university, leave the country, fill out the census, and so on. As it stands, the recording of our lives is an integral part of democracy; it is a requirement of citizenship and of personhood in 'civilised' societies. As Guenther (2013) notes:

> It takes a whole network of interconnected obligations, both in the present and extending into the past and future, to create and sustain social personhood, and it takes a whole network of exclusions, interruptions, and violations, not only against individuals but against the social and temporal horizons of their lives, to destroy that personhood.
>
> (pp. xx–xxi)

I read Guenther's focus on solitary confinement as a search for what constitutes a human, by looking not for human 'nature' so to speak, but the conditions under which a human thrives. Her conception of what constitutes death (social and civil) speaks to her conception of life as relational. A human with severed relationships (not just to other humans but also the environment) is a human suffering, and if relationships are what constitutes life, then the severance of these, when severe enough, constitutes a living death. An attack on a human's relationship with other humans, their history, or the non-human world is an attack on the human, on the self, and not just on an individual but a communal self. Resistance to such attacks, to such forms of violence, becomes of utmost importance to the survival and flourishing of both notions of self.

## Keeping school

According to Denton (1968), philosophers of education 'concern themselves with questions of particularly human concern, questions having to do with the

development of specific human beings' (p. 97). For educators, to attend to the development of specific human beings entails having an idea, a belief, or an assumption of the content of the concepts of 'development' and 'human'. Historically both concepts have proven contentious. The notion of fully human has been defined in opposition to those it has excluded, those closest to the state of nature. So, too, development has been defined as progress away from the state of nature, as the movement from 'savage' to 'civilised'. The concepts human and development mean different things to different people working in education (teachers, principals, curriculum designers, policymakers, philosophers of education, and so forth); sometimes the differences are minimal, other times radical. These differences often reflect the institutional, political, societal, and cultural narratives in which the teacher is embedded. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2008) argue there is no separation between education and politics, 'that all inquiry is both political and moral' (p. 2). Dewey (2001) expresses something similar when speaking of the difficulties he witnessed in trying to bring about educational reform. The conservative, he said, was still there.

> He was there not only as a teacher in the schoolroom, but he was there in the board of education; he was there because he was still in the heart and mind of the parent; because he still possessed and controlled the intellectual and moral standards and expectations of the community. We began to learn that an educational reform is but one phase of a general social modification.
>
> (p. 390)

The norms held by teachers, educators, parents, and the wider community, that is, all of us, influence education. Broadly speaking, they create the climate in which education takes place and in which the educator, along with the educational structure, is created. As Denton (1963) notes, the push to create a value neutral, skills-based educational system is lost the moment decisions of content and methodology, of what and how we teach, are made, as 'norms constitute the nature of those decisions' (p. 2). Although the classroom is sometimes thought to be immune to larger community concerns, and 'in some ways, society has expected a protective bubble to exist between the problems of our communities and the spillover into the school setting' (Furlong & Morrison, 2000, p. 74), as Dewey, Denton, Micheal Furlong and Gale Morrison, and others attest, this is not the case. Society creates children and children grow to create society, and education becomes complicit in the perpetuation and maintenance of this identity formation.

Dewey's (2010) insistence on the need for a philosophy of education grew out of his recognition that an 'environment in which some are limited will always in reaction create conditions that prevent the full development even of those who fancy they enjoy complete freedom for unhindered growth' (p. 244). Imagine, if you will, a world in which when you sit down to relax you

do not have to shut out any chaos, you do not have to assume a state of temporary ignorance as to the suffering of others. Imagine if you could sit safely in the knowledge that everything in the world was fine—truly, completely fine. Imagine, also, if this knowledge was lasting and not simply a fleeting moment of false certitude. I cannot imagine what that would feel like because I have never experienced it. Sure, I've had moments of contentment when I've felt everything in my life to be under control, heading in the direction I desired, when I knew where my next meal was coming from, and I didn't have anything to fear when I shut my eyes at night. But while my own sphere of existence might be relatively stable, that of a large percentage of Earth's population is not, and I can never completely shut out the knowledge of the Other. I am reminded constantly, and with this reminder comes the memory of instability, of the possibility of suffering and the certainty of a hopefully far off death. It is, then, to hope that I often turn. I hope that it will never happen to me, that I will never suffer, that I will never die. I know death is inevitable, but I still hope in vain. I can minimise suffering, and I can, with the help of clean water, good food, shelter, sanitation, the medical profession, access to scientific studies, and so forth, perhaps, extend my time on Earth, but I cannot do so indefinitely. This knowledge saddens and scares me, and so I shut it out, and along with it the suffering of all the Others that remind me of my own fragility, and I blame them for their situation, for by so doing I reinforce my delusion that life's hardships cannot touch me; I am not so lazy, so poor, so stupid, and so on. I am not them. However, adopting this attitude limits me. It draws a line around my conception of self and channels my efforts into enforcing this line and, thereby, enforcing the Otherness of Others. In this way, I add to the oppression of Others. Many people also hope that there will be a part of them that continues after death and that all the wrongs of the world, if not justified, can, at least, be excused as God's plan with those who have transgressed to be judged in the afterlife. Such hope is an evasion, it is philosophical suicide; vain hope meant to bring comfort at the expense of action to minimise suffering in the here and now.

In 1934, Dewey invited us to imagine a world in which 'the spirit of inhumanity bred by economic competition and exploitation' gives way to 'cooperation and the spirit which sees in every other individual an equal right to share in the cultural and material fruits of collective human invention, industry, skill and knowledge' (p. 245). While such a world is likely impossible, it is, he stresses, the only 'ideal worthy of the name of education' (p. 245). We might be tempted to criticise such idealistic appeals. However, considering World War II was a mere five short years away from the time of his writing and the urgency of his point was the prevention of violence, his assertion that 'unless hearts and minds are prepared by education, [the society of the next generation] is likely to come attended with all the evils of social changes by violence' (p. 245) carries a certain empirical weight. Dewey (2012) also wrote that if we choose 'force as a method of settling social issues', then we 'have a belief that force, physical and brute force, after all is the best final reliance' (p. 99).

Most of us, however, would agree that the goal of education should be aimed elsewhere, perhaps at the creation of a world that really is fine.

That force exists as a method of settling social issues is undeniable; we do not have to look much further than the local newspaper headlines or social media reports. That peace is something that can be taught seems intuitive; that violence, including othering, can be taught is, perhaps, a little less so. However, if peace can be taught so, too, can violence, and if we are not actively engaged in peace education, then we fail in preventing violence education. By peace education, I mean an educational process that (i) embodies a conception of peace as the ability and disposition to cope with conflict through socially embedded inquiry, and (ii) acknowledges that peace is never finally achieved, always struggled for (Thornton & Burgh, 2017, p. 60). If teachers are

> ignoring school violence, the name-calling, the shoving, the fighting, the harassment, they are condoning it. Children see teachers walking by, pretending not to notice, and they learn that the way we treat others, the way we interact on the street or in the playground, is nobody's business but our own.
>
> (Epp & Watkinson, 1997, p. 193)

To prevent violence, peace education, therefore, needs to be everyone's business. As Furlong and Morrison (2000) note, traditionally, the responsibility for dealing with violence in the classroom has fallen outside of the realm of teacher responsibility, to the principal, educational administrators, security contractors, or the law. However, 'the threat and reality of physical harm has consequences that suppress the maximal educational growth and development of students. Such a threat lands the issue squarely on the educator's plate of concern' (p. 74). The same is true of epistemic violence as it, too, prevents learning and should, therefore, be of equal concern.

If it is the case that 'in some areas, the community norms and behaviors regarding violence have thoroughly invaded the school' (p. 74), then we, as part of a community, as part of society, are also implicated. If society creates the child and the child grows to create society, then critiques of forms of societal violence (physical, psychological, and epistemic) become relevant for education. Plumwood and Camus help advance our understanding of the ways in which societal violence is transmitted and perpetuated by going to the source, that is, philosophical suicide and the logic of domination. Plumwood's (2012) attack by a crocodile

> revealed [to her] that it was possible for people—as individuals, groups, perhaps *whole cultures* that subscribe to a particular dominant *story*— to be completely and *systematically wrong* about quite simple and basic things—our relationship to food, to one another, the intertwining of life and death, the fleshly, embodied character of human existence—and be

quite *unaware* of it. A few people may come to see the illusion for what it is because they stumble across certain clues, *experiences that do not fit the dominant story.*

<div align="right">(pp. 12–13, *italics* added)</div>

To able to teach in a way that disrupts epistemic violence, educators must first un-learn the dominant narrative, and learn how to recognise it in the classroom by recognising and responding to instances of epistemic violence. Un-learning requires attempting to understand the stories that do not fit the dominant narrative to start to recognise the perspective of the outsider, those who are uniquely positioned to understand the hidden premises of our social structures, the hidden values woven into our societal fabric, and by so doing, teachers become traitorous identities—a concept I'll return to in detail in Chapter 7. However, a common objection is that school is no place for the questioning of values; rather, its role is simply to transmit the values of the culture in which it is embedded. Thomas Colwell (1970) explains this attitude and the objections to change as a 'positivistic pragmatism', a false pragmatism that is concerned only with the immediate and fails to plan for the future. He thinks education is

> fearful to define broader purposes, because to do so would involve questioning the values that underlie present arrangements, and this would detract from *keeping school*, would be 'utopian,' or even subversive. Hence the expedient quality of education today. What is 'good' educationally follows from the growth trends of society. If society is proliferating in population, building ever bigger cities, producing more and more for a seemingly endless consumption, despoiling its environment, and conducting tragically senseless war, it is not education's job to reason why, but to accept the inevitability of this growth ('progress') and to fashion its activities in a manner best suited to realize it.

<div align="right">(pp. 113–114, *italics* added)</div>

In Chapter 3, I set out colonisation as a form of colonial utopia, which created a dystopia for Others. The objection to utopian ideals that Colwell notes is a familiar but curious one. The utopian objection to questioning values speaks to something unattainable in an ideal, and, indeed, it aligns with the definition of utopia as 'no-place'. The charge of utopia is made as if to say that the idea in question is too fanciful to be even entertained. For example, Plato's state is, according to Thomas More (1684), utopia, or as he put it, 'empty words' (p. 140). However, Dominic Hyde (2014) points out that in the preface to More's book, *Utopia*, there is an

> ambiguity inherent in talk of 'utopias'. [. . .] Once 'No-Place'—deriving from the Greek ou- ('no'), topos ('place'), outopia—it was now 'The Good Place'—eu—('well' or 'good'), topos, eutopia. Utopia is

seemingly ambiguous between an impossibly ideal place that is conse-
quently nowhere to be found and a place that is good enough and con-
sequently can be found.

(p. 140)

The ideal, once no-place, is made flesh through the acts of people and the
creation of laws (p. 140). But whether, once inscribed upon the earth, a uto-
pia becomes a eutopia or dystopia depends on your position within the newly
created social order, for a utopia is just that, a blueprint for a new society, the
epistemic which precedes the ontological. To dismiss something as 'utopian' is
to misunderstand More's meaning, for to 'aim for something better was clearly
separable from aiming for the impossibly remote' (Hyde, 2014, p. 140). Uto-
pias can be created; however, there is nothing magical in the idea that guaran-
tees the result will be eutopian rather than dystopian. Consequently, 'utopia'
is neither an objection to nor an argument for 'questioning the values that
underlie present arrangements' in education, as Colwell put it.

Indeed, I contend that not only *should* we question values from an ethical
standpoint, of possible exclusion of Other, but we *must* question values that
are inherent in our suicidal ideology. And as I have already discussed, infinite
growth on a finite planet is not only untenable and irrational, but it is down-
right suicidal and dystopian for all. If 'keeping school' aids in keeping 'pro-
gress', 'disrupting school' becomes a rational course of action. If the 'growth
trends' of society are those set upon their present course through colonisation,
it is, as Colwell puts it, time for education to 'reason why' and to 'question the
values that underlie present arrangements'. The questioning of values cannot
easily be dismissed as a utopian fantasy. Indeed, given that racism and sexism
for that matter are structural, and education is an integral part of perpetuating
societal structures, then education is integral to both. Safeguarding an ever-
perpetual present or 'keeping school', as Colwell put it, also becomes impli-
cated in perpetuating structural prejudices, and questioning values becomes
integral to undoing epistemic violence and restructuring education towards
the betterment of human and non-human Other.

## Conclusion

At the start of the chapter, I spoke of the ideological tensions, conflicts, and
contradictions concerning the role of History as a subject in the curricu-
lum and noted that these tensions have practical implications for curriculum
design. The Stolen Generations in Australia was an attempt to assimilate, to
erase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as part of
Australian identity. Failing to include these in the History curriculum achieves
the same results. The concept of linear time also presents problems. As Rose
has stated, the past-present-future linear conception of time provides a tem-
plate for colonising thought as it moves away from the realities of the past
by creating a stark separation between past and present, thereby relegating

wrongs to history and, denying their present-day realities while also creating a fictitious 'triumphal history' that helps in 'keeping school' or preserving social order of a dystopian/utopian kind. The Western monochronic conception of time differs to Aboriginal polychronic conceptions which focus on the quality of time, such as relationships, communication, and the results of activities that can be multiple at once, rather than on quantity. As such, it provides a different account of history which affects future narratives. Rose's critique of time as a colonising force also explains how it links to the creation of utopia as a colonising goal and eventually how it is tied to the notion of childhood as a stage of development on the straight road to adulthood. Such linear notions of time and development also play a role in the maintenance of dominant social structures. Baldwin's powerful explanation of structural racism reveals some of the ways in which epistemic violence is structured into the socio-political landscape and shapes not only how the colonial 'individual' relates to the Other but also to self. The role of the teacher, therefore, is integral in mitigating classroom violence, which needs to include epistemic violence.

In the next chapter, I turn to a pedagogy that can be adapted to both elucidate and respond to structural epistemic violence, an educational philosophy developed by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp in which students engage in collaborative philosophical inquiry to develop and improve thinking. As an existing approach to education, in which philosophy functions educationally, I argue that the community of inquiry pedagogy holds potential as a student-centred, pragmatic approach to education, which focuses on collaborative philosophical dialogue as a method for developing inter-subjective, self-correcting learning communities. Such communities acknowledge fallibilism over certitude as vital to knowledge construction and are, therefore, well placed to question values and structures.

## Notes

1  *Hack* is the name of a current affairs radio programme on Australian national radio broadcaster Triple J. See: www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/education-minister-tells-hack-proposed-school-history-curriculu/13532152
2  Yarralin is 382 km southwest of Katherine in the Northern Territory, Australia, situated within the Victoria River Downs cattle station on the traditional lands of the Ngaringman people. Yarralin is home to over 300 people, including Aboriginal people from the Ngarinyman, Mudbarra, Bilinara, and Gurinji tribes.
3  Plumwood (1993a) understands the problem as follows: 'A dualism, I argue, should be understood as a particular way of dividing the world which results from a certain kind of denied dependency on a subordinated other. This relationship of denied dependency determines a certain kind of logical structure, as one in which the denial and the relation of domination/subordination shapes the identity of both the relata' (p. 443).
4  See: A compulsory and highly controversial measure from 2016 to 2022. The card has been renamed 'smartcard' and while it is now voluntary for some, for many it is still compulsory and places constraints on how they choose to spend a significant portion of their income.

# 6 Dwelling in uncertainty

## Introduction

In some quarters, philosophy as an academic discipline has an unpopular reputation as a dry, abstract, or self-indulgent pursuit far removed from 'real life' that does not adequately reflect or address the everyday experiences, concerns, or perspectives of most people outside of the dominant discourse. However, the Socratic approach to philosophy is about leading the examined life. Through a commitment to philosophical questioning, engagement in arguments that are rigorous, reciprocal, and sincere, and a willingness to listen and respond to others as equal participants, we come to understand how little we really know about ourselves and the world around us, our values, the meaning of life, and our identity. In this sense, philosophy can spring from and be played out in people's everyday life as well as public life: in an individual's choices, in policies and laws, in societal structures and institutions. An awareness of the history of philosophical thought can, therefore, help our understanding of why things are the way they are and our imaginings of how they could be otherwise.

As the world is a diverse place, 'speaking not just of a diversity of people, but of a diversity of ideas', philosophy then 'has value to those learning about the world, especially those that are new to the world, i.e., children' (Thornton & Burgh, 2019, p. 235). It follows that philosophy cannot be ignored as an educational methodology. This has already been recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which, in its 2007 study, *Philosophy, a School of Freedom*, states: 'If there is a message to be conveyed by this study, it would certainly [be] that of exhorting us to consider the teaching of philosophy to be necessary and something to be reckoned with' (p. xii). A forerunner in the field of educational philosophy is 'Philosophy for Children' (also referred to by proponents as P4C), which is recognised as an exemplary educational philosophy used in school classrooms around the world, comprising purpose-written classroom materials and an educational method that develops thinking within the context of group dialogue about philosophical issues.

Central to Philosophy for Children is the 'community of inquiry' (also known as the COI), which uses

> collaborative pedagogical methods based upon theories of socio-cognitive learning. It is a learning community which can be used to challenge the ontological, epistemological, and axiological underpinnings of the cultural context within which the school, and the knowledge it transmits through established disciplines and allocated texts and resources, is embedded.
>
> (Thornton & Burgh, 2019, p. 235)

The educational merit of Philosophy for Children is that it is an inquiry-based, community-centred approach to teaching and learning through philosophy, which is steeped in the tradition of 'reflective education' in which good thinking and its improvement are central. Reflective education purposefully puts thinking at the centre of teaching and learning by fostering good habits of thinking. Its pedagogical purpose is to actively engage students in reflective thinking and thoughtful action (both essential features of informed practice integral to active democratic citizenship). Philosophy for Children, follows the philosophical tradition that started with Socrates, who paved the way for Dewey's pedagogy.

But while Philosophy for Children can be used to question the philosophical underpinnings of education and thus to disrupt school can we say that philosophy itself is without bias? Moreover, what can be said of the community of inquiry pedagogy? Firstly, the inclusiveness of philosophy can be, and has been, questioned by numerous scholars. Plumwood (1993a), for example, critiques the exclusionary nature of Western philosophy when she writes:

> The participants in the great dialogue of western philosophy, which extends now some two and a half thousand years into the past, have been almost entirely male, white and drawn from the privileged sections of society. That they have not seen this as relevant to their philosophical pursuits indicates how much they have spoken of and for one another, and how incompletely they have, despite their pretensions as philosophers to press the ultimate questions, critically examined themselves and their political relationship to the world about them.
>
> (p. ix)

It is noteworthy that Lipman and Sharp, the founders of Philosophy for Children, were not ignorant of such criticisms of philosophy. Sharp wrote extensively on feminism (see de la Garza, 2018), and Lipman (2008) was critical of reductive philosophy, writing in his autobiography *A Life Teaching Thinking*: 'trying to teach thinking by teaching a few individual cognitive skills is like teaching someone to play the piano by instructing the student in piano technique using a single key or a single finger' (p. 149). Questions have, however,

been raised as to the extent to which the dominant narratives of democracy have been critiqued, or at least seriously questioned by scholars of Philosophy for Children, a topic to which I will return in greater detail the final chapter. In fact, there is a burgeoning field of critical literature aimed at the improvement of philosophy with children. For example, authors have tackled issues such as the role of the teacher in inquiry (see Burgh & Thornton, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Kohan et al., 2017; Oliverio, 2017; Thornton et al., 2023); the concept of childhood that underpins Philosophy for Children's theory and practice (see Kennedy & Kohan, 2017); gender dualisms (Bleazby, 2009); the privileging of reason and the lack of attention to embodiment or lived experience (see Laverty, 1994; Redshaw, 1994); binary assumptions of sex and gender (Haynes, McKenna, & McWilliam, 2001); male dominance, and the separation of language and logic as a problematic binary (see Haynes, 1994); selfhood, identity, gender construction, social conditioning, and the education of girls and young women (see Glaser, 1994, 2007; Lone, 1997; Turgeon, 1997); gender stereotyping in philosophical stories-as-text such as the IAPC novels (see Slade, 1994); feminist ethics and humans as ethical agents rather than epistemic subjects (see Laverty, 1994; Sharp, 1994); the practice of Philosophy for Children in countries around the world (Daniel, 1994; de la Garza, 1994; Silva, 1994); the development of a feminist philosophy of education (see de la Garza, 2018; Sharp & Gregory, 2009); discrimination, 'sexuality and sexual preference' (Splitter, 1993, p. 74); and the unquestioned normativity of the materials used (see Murris, 2016; Chetty, 2014), among others. All these issues are important and should be of concern to all educators,[1] as they permeate curricula, classroom texts and resources, pedagogy, teacher preparation courses and professional development, education policy, and the hidden curriculum. These critiques open new pathways that provide opportunities to develop diverse approaches to the community of inquiry and incorporate different traditions of philosophy into curriculum materials. Such critical work is a hallmark of philosophy, and the plurality of criticisms is a sign of a healthy, engaged, and global philosophical community. It is in the spirit of engagement and improvement that, in this chapter, I provide a critique of Philosophy for Children and its accompanying pedagogy, the community of inquiry. As I have argued elsewhere, philosophy is not epistemically or methodologically neutral. Rather, it is akin to other subjects, as it is

> a value laden cultural artefact and not separate from cultural discourse. However, philosophy as practice, such as in a COI, has the potential for self-critique. To maintain an attitude of fallibilism toward our own biases and prejudices (those things we think not to question) is one of philosophy's greatest strengths.
>
> (Thornton & Burgh, 2019, p. 235)

In this chapter, I first provide a brief account of Philosophy for Children before pointing out its more worrying normative aspects, which, I argue, can

hinder its ability to self-correct, the very ability that I wish to strengthen in the final chapter. Next I go into detail regarding some major criticisms, particularly the concerns over epistemic issues related to bias, prejudice, neutrality, and normativity that affect teaching practice and the texts assigned as stimulus materials. In response to these concerns, I seek to reinvigorate the pragmatist philosophical foundations of the community of inquiry by placing emphasis on Peirce's notion of genuine doubt and its relationship to fallibilism, before investigating Bleazby's concept of social reconstruction learning, which incorporates the practical, active dimensions of inquiry and rests on Dewey's version of pragmatism. Social reconstruction learning involves students engaging in communities of inquiry with their local communities to reconstruct real social problems and thereby collapses educations theory/practice dualism. Bringing together Lipman, Peirce, Dewey and Bleazby's contributions to the development of the community of inquiry as an educational practice, I argue, can increase its potential for self-correction and move us one step closer to eco-rational education.

## The community of inquiry

Lipman, together with Sharp, developed Philosophy for Children, which Lipman (2004) later referred to as an educational philosophy because the purpose was for philosophy to function educationally and not just be a theory of education. Their initial aim was to use philosophy to develop children's reasoning skills. It should be noted that Philosophy for Children is an approach to education rather than a rigid programme. It comprises a curriculum that includes a series of philosophical stories-as-text (novels) with accompanying teacher instruction manuals, and a pedagogy they referred to as the community of inquiry. Lipman and Sharp (1978) drew primarily on Peirce's notion of a community of inquirers and Dewey's educational theory and practice. Both heralded Philosophy for Children as an exemplar of democratic practice, due to its emphasis on dialogic inquiry as a form of communal self-correction which they believed necessary for critical citizenship. Moreover, Philosophy for Children fits Dewey's (1916) description of democracy as 'primarily a form of associated living, a conjoint communicated experience' (p. 93). In other words, 'philosophy can promote democracy, insofar as philosophical inquiry is an exemplar of the kind of deliberative inquiry required for informed and active democratic decision-making' (Burgh, 2018, p. 39), which begins to address Plumwood's concerns regarding democratic correctiveness. Thus, the philosophical content of Philosophy for Children and its methodology is thought to be liberating, freeing the child from traditional dogmatic forms of education.

The presence of philosophy in education is centuries old, and the history of philosophy as an agent for social change is even older. Indeed, Socrates was found guilty of impiety and sentenced to death by hemlock for his philosophical questioning, which was viewed as a disruption of established social and

moral practices, particularly through corrupting the youth of ancient Athens. It was this reflective aspect of philosophy, as a methodology and pedagogy, that Lipman and Sharp sought to develop, but

> [u]nlike others experimenting with 'pre-college philosophy' at the time, who saw schools as a place to do philosophy with young people, Lipman and Sharp saw doing philosophy as an ideal of the educational experience, even capable of transforming education more broadly.
>
> (Gregory, Haynes, & Murris, 2017, p. xxvi)

Unlike other approaches to educational philosophy (i.e., philosophy functioning educationally), such as Socratic Dialogue by Leonard Nelson, which focuses on critical philosophy, following the thinking of Immanuel Kant and Jakob Fries, and Oscar Brenifier's method of Socratic maieutics, their specific method of fostering philosophical discussion and critical discourse with children and adolescents in an educational setting is unique in its emphasis on philosophy's ability to *reconstruct* education and, hence, society.

Initially concerned about the level of critical thinking in society generally, and in schools particularly, in 1969 Lipman commenced writing the first in a series of philosophical stories-as-text (or 'novels' as they are commonly referred to), *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* (published in 1971). Lipman took the view that philosophical questioning should have a central place in the curriculum to enable students to develop their critical thinking capability. As Lipman (2017) puts it, 'Philosophy for Children (P4C) didn't just emerge out of nowhere, it was built upon the recommendations of John Dewey and Russian educator, Lev Vygotsky, who emphasized the necessity to teach for thinking, not just for memorizing' (p. 3). By 1972, Lipman left his position at Columbia University to further develop his ideas on philosophy functioning 'as a kind of education' (p. 4) at Montclair State College (now Montclair State University) in New Jersey, USA, where he met Sharp, and soon thereafter, in 1974, established the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC), where they began to take philosophy into K-12 classrooms. Sharp, who remained a lifelong collaborator with Lipman, was to have a great influence on the development of both the practical and theoretical aspects of the community of inquiry pedagogy (see Gregory & Laverty, 2018). Lipman (2008) described Sharp's arrival as 'a blessing to both myself and the institute' (p. 124). Indeed, it was Sharp who first proposed the idea of accompanying teacher instruction manuals (including leading ideas, discussion plans, and exercises) to be used in conjunction with the purpose-written philosophical stories-as-text. The instruction manuals contain philosophical concepts and philosophical procedures intended to directly relate to students' experiences through the experiences of fictional characters that provide stimulus for philosophical classroom dialogue, a topic to which I will return.

The pedagogy of the community of inquiry Lipman and Sharp developed is founded on the claim that deliberative and collaborative communities are

exceptional in their ability to foster critical, creative, and caring thinking, leading to sounder reasoning, understanding, and judgement. This claim is supported by a growing amount of empirical evidence (see Lipman, 1998, p. 278; Millett, Scholl, & Tapper, 2019, Millett & Tapper, 2012). An analysis of 18 studies by Garcia-Moriyon, Robello, and Colom (2005) concluded that 'the implementation of P4C led to an improvement in students' reasoning skills of more than half a standard deviation' (p. 19). Other studies concluded that the practice of philosophical inquiry in primary and secondary classrooms produces increases in measured IQ, sustained cognitive benefits, and clear performance gains in other school studies (Topping & Trickey, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Trickey & Topping, 2004, 2006, 2007). Australian research has shown the potential for philosophical inquiry to foster pedagogical transformation (Scholl, Nichols, & Burgh, 2008, 2009, 2014), more effective learning in the science classroom (Burgh & Nichols, 2012; Nichols, Burgh, & Kennedy, 2017), and the reconstruction of thinking (Burgh, Thornton, & Fynes-Clinton, 2018; Fynes-Clinton, 2018; Fynes-Clinton & Renshaw, 2021; Nichols, Burgh, & Fynes-Clinton, 2017). Further research has also been conducted through the UNESCO Chair 'Practice of Philosophy with Children' project carried out by the University of Nantes, supported by the University of Angers' research programme EnJeu[x]. According to the goals of the UNESCO Chair,

> the practice of philosophy with children promotes the understanding of community: highlighting reasons as the link that unites humanity, beyond their individual differences, and allows intercultural dialogue. Philosophy allows children to see that everyone—even beyond their own communities—ask themselves the same questions, although the answers are multiple and plural. Teaching philosophy from an early age, bears not only pedagogical, but, more importantly, political implications to serve a democratic society. This is the reason for UNESCO's support for the philosophical practices with children.
>
> (Chirouter & Vannier, 2017, p. 114)

The community of inquiry fosters philosophical practices with children and adolescents through collaborative dialogic inquiry, which is both student-centred and community-focused rather than teacher-directed. The class becomes a community of people who inquire cooperatively and collaboratively in a self-reflective and critical manner about issues of interest to all of them. The participants 'follow the inquiry where it leads and collaboratively engage in self-correction' (Sharp, 1993, p. 57). In doing so, they 'become aware of themselves as thinkers who make judgements based on reason and criteria' (Splitter, 1991, pp. 13–14). This process is characterised by inquiry aimed at knowledge and understanding; intellectual risk-taking and self-correction; cooperation, trust, tolerance, and respect; a shared sense of puzzlement and wonder; student-centred dialogue; participants accepting

responsibility for their own views; and students learning to think for themselves (as opposed to thinking by themselves) (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 97).

One practical outcome of thinking collaboratively through philosophy is that it can assist in developing students' critical and creative abilities as well as their capacity for deliberative communication. This is because philosophy's strength lies in its ability to define and analyse problems, promote innovative and imaginative thinking, and evaluate opinions in order to make informed decisions, but also to reflect critically on the justifications for decisions. Moreover, it can foster the ability to clearly and fluently express ideas when interacting with others towards a common outcome. By understanding what philosophy has to offer through dialogical engagement with others, students will improve their ability to think together and 'develop an understanding and attitude towards democratic citizenship' (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 98). The community of inquiry, therefore, has wider application as a template for the reconstruction of *education as inquiry*.

The specific classroom method for fostering philosophical discussion and critical discourse is typically articulated as five stages of inquiry: the offering of the text, the construction of the agenda, solidifying the community, using exercises and discussion plans, and encouraging further responses (Lipman, 1991, pp. 241–243).[2] The teacher's role is that of facilitator and co-inquirer (rather than an all-knowing expert or imparter of information) who models the process of inquiry insofar as they are responsible for the form of the discussion rather than the specific subject matter. The philosophy that takes place is generated by all the participants in the community of inquiry, who bring their own experiences to the discussion. The possibilities for what students find philosophically interesting are limited only by the constitution of the class and the teacher's ability to stimulate interest in issues and topics relevant to young people. In a community of inquiry, students are 'taught how to think (i.e., the main concern of the teacher is to promote the inquiry process) not what to think (i.e., substantive values are not taught, rather, they are the outcomes of the inquiry process)', so that not only do they learn about philosophy, but they *do* philosophy (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 97).

Lipman (1991) speaks of 'converting a classroom into a community of inquiry', which refers to more than just the five stages listed above, but to the aforementioned, wider aim of *education as inquiry*, in which students: (i) 'listen to one another with respect, build on one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another's assumptions', and (ii) attempt 'to follow the inquiry where it leads rather than being penned in by the boundary lines of existing disciplines' (p. 15). He uses the metaphor of dialogue that 'moves forward like a boat tacking into the wind, but in the process its progress comes to resemble that of thinking itself', and when 'this process is internalised or introjected by the participants, they come to think as the process thinks' (p. 15). His conclusion is of particular importance as it emphasises the habituation of students into

the thought processes of inquiry (hence the emphasis on internalisation and introjection). The teacher's major task is to assist students to attain the required skills and capabilities, so that, progressively, the characteristic behaviours of the community of inquiry (listed above) are internalised, and students can think for themselves as part of a collaborative process.

Philosophy functioning educationally, has the capacity to integrate curriculum, teaching, and learning with the aim of improving intellectual and social outcomes. Its effectiveness is threefold:

> First, it can assist schools, teachers and curriculum planners to engage critically and creatively with the challenges facing education in modern times. Second, in the hands of an experienced teacher as facilitator, it can engage students in an education with meaning and relevance to everyday life. Third, it provides a guiding ideal for classroom practice in teacher education courses and professional development for teachers.
>
> (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 97)

In these ways, many of the aims and objectives of current education reforms can be accommodated through student engagement in philosophical inquiry as structured problem-posing and inquiry-based pedagogy. Philosophical inquiry is also suitable for curricula that promote integrated, community-based tasks and activities which place emphasis on the immediate problems students variously experience, as a way of developing the capacities and dispositions required for active and informed citizenship aimed at social action.

Splitter and Sharp (1995) argue that all subjects in the curriculum can be taught as forms of inquiry, akin to the researchers, academics, and practitioners who move in and out of the disciplinary communities of inquiry that relate to their work (e.g., scientific, religious, historical, literary, and artistic inquiries). What they propose is that 'by redefining teaching and learning as inquiry-based activities, children and teachers can participate in this process', and that '[t]his redefinition is the key to improving thinking in all students' (p. 24). We can glean from their words that 'the teacher and the students, like their professional counterparts, can move in and out of various communities of inquiry that are articulated by the curriculum subjects, but whose knowledge base is informed by the knowledge of each accompanying discipline' (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 100). However, as Lipman has alerted us, it is much more than this, because making these connections also provides a greater understanding of how those disciplines are practiced. Dewey insisted this is vital to experiential education (being immersed in real-world situations), hence the inclusion of social occupation work in his Laboratory School (his practical attempt to implement his theory, established in Chicago in 1896) to synthesise the curriculum by moving between theory (curriculum subjects) and practice. The school was a place 'where students learnt through undertaking practical, "hands-on" activities like sewing, building, gardening and so on' (Bleazby, 2013, p. 154; see also Dewey, 1936; Knoll, 2016; Tanner, 1991, 1997). I will

revisit the concept of experiential education again, particularly its essential role in social reconstruction, later in this chapter and subsequently when I discuss the role of place in education in Chapter 7, but next, I investigate the role of curriculum in Philosophy for Children.

## Modelling dialogue

The IAPC novels embed philosophy into everyday conversations about issues familiar to students, and act as stimuli over which children, and not solely adults, have control: 'it is their story and they use it to set an agenda for discussion and philosophical inquiry' (Sharp, 2017, p. 18). The inclusion of child characters in the philosophical novels, who are engaged in philosophical dialogue with other children and adults, is said to allow the novels to act as models of philosophical practice. Just as Plato's dialogues are considered by many to be the epitome of philosophical dialogue, in the philosophy in schools' community Lipman's novels are still considered by many to be 'the gold standard for Philosophy for Children story materials' (Cam, 2017, p. 120). Indeed, 'the complete IAPC curriculum has been translated into scores of different languages and dialects' (Gregory, 2012, p. 198). This demonstrates that Lipman's and Sharp's legacies are expansive, as Gregory, Haynes, and Murris (2017) note: 'Today, Philosophy for Children is practiced, interpreted, debated, researched and recreated in more than 60 countries around the world' (p. xxi). In his autobiography, Lipman (2008) proved cognisant of the desire for different countries to appropriate Philosophy for Children to reflect their own culture:

> Each nation is looking for an educational approach that reflects its own experience and is therefore in a sense *autobiographical*. They see Philosophy for Children as an approach that welcomes their appropriation of it, so that in time it will come to be seen as indigenous and natural, as if it had sprung full-grown from the local culture and its component traditions.
>
> (p. 145)

Indeed, diverse approaches have emerged from different educational needs and social, cultural, and political contexts. Many countries have had the IAPC novels translated or have slightly adapted them to make the characters familiar to students of that country, such as names, speech, mannerisms, and so forth. Some countries have rejected the novels due to cultural differences but have still retained their original characteristics when writing their own. Others have rejected the novels altogether. For example, Australian teachers, for the most part, have abandoned them in favour of their own stimulus materials, and as a result, since 1991, a plethora of new and diverse materials have emerged in Australia, including purpose-written short stories, picture books, and teacher instruction manuals, and will likely continue to be produced (Burgh & Thornton, 2016c, 2017a).

On the other hand, the original teacher instruction manuals, which accompany each of the IAPC novels, have proven to be the most popular and long-lived in terms of continual usage. Susan Wilks (2019), who conducted one of the earliest studies on the effectiveness of the curriculum materials in Australian schools, reported that '[c]lassroom trialling found that the exercises in the IAPC manuals provided a supportive structure for teachers using other stimulus materials to tease out philosophical issues together with helpful guidance for modelling questioning and discussion techniques' (p. 98). Many of the existing picture books selected drew on aspects of the philosophical tradition, yet, regardless of the philosophical content, unlike the IAPC novels, there was no modelling of philosophical dialogue. Modelling was thought by Lipman and Sharp to be a cornerstone of Philosophy for Children. Thus, the move away from the purpose-written philosophical story-as-text, undertaken in Australia and other countries, was questioned and cautioned by both Lipman and Sharp. Sharp (2017) had this to say:

> Even though some might believe that approaching philosophical issues through traditional literature is easier than working from these purpose written novels and manuals, I suspect that it is more likely to be the other way around. In most countries, teachers are not prepared in the art and craft of philosophical inquiry. To explore the philosophical dimension of literature, and teaching children to do the same, requires an expertise that cannot be taken for granted, especially given the complexity of a good piece of literature.
>
> (p. 21)

Sharp's words point to the over-riding question of how best to make philosophical progress in the classroom, a question that is still contentious. Indeed, her words ushered in an ongoing debate regarding in-service training and professional development for teachers and teacher-educators, pre-service teacher preparation programmes, and the criteria for the selection of stimulus material. Sharp's and Lipman's assumptions regarding the modelling of philosophical inquiry in the philosophical stories-as-text raise many questions regarding structural bias, prejudice, and neutrality.

The community of inquiry is said to develop citizens' capacities and dispositions through an emphasis on experiential learning. By placing students in sight of problems designed to foster the exploration and examination of their own and each other's reactions to them, they come to understand that a multiplicity of thinking is possible. This multiplicity is assumed and said to allow students the opportunity to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct their thinking and, in doing so, lessen resistance to difference. However, many question the assumption of multiplicity and the role of stimulus material in philosophical inquiry. For example, Darren Chetty (2014) challenges what he calls Lipman's claims 'to have "neutralized" the "godlike power of the author" in his philosophical novels' (p. 15). The curriculum materials, he argues, are not

neutral as they 'ignore the foundations of systematic discrimination and the ways institutions have arisen out of and continue to perpetuate the repression of minoritized groups' (p. 15). Murris (2016) adds that the traditional 'P4C curriculum is evaluative and prescriptive (in the sense of what counts as philosophy and what needs to be appropriated by the learners) and therefore normative' (p. 67). Doing away with the characters in the purpose-written stories-as-text, she argues, *frees* children from the normative pressures of aspiring to the ideal 'adult philosopher's child' (p. 63). Further, Chetty (2014) notes that 'the selection of a text will itself steer a discussion, inasmuch that it will make some ideas more likely and others less likely to be explored' (p. 25). Chetty's criticisms, therefore, extend beyond the IAPC novels to the selection of classroom resources generally, for example, the pictures books, purpose-written short stories, and other stimulus materials teachers use instead of the novels. He offers the picture book *Elmer*, by David McKee, as an example. In the book the title character of Elmer 'is a multi-coloured "patchwork" elephant in a world where all the other elephants, though differing in age and size, are grey or "elephant colour"' (pp. 18–19). The book is an attempt at promoting difference by abstracting away from reality and has been used by practitioners as a stimulus for discussions about race. Chetty contends that such abstract stimulus is 'not analogous to the realities of racism and multiculturalism, but rather reaffirm[s] the discourse of Whiteness' (pp. 18–19). The use of stories such as *Elmer*, along with purpose-written stimulus materials are thought to create an impartial, intellectually safe environment by connecting student experiences to the characters in the picture books, and philosophical stories-as-text. However, such abstractions, away from everyday experiences into the often-ideal world of the characters, do little to uncover the prejudices embedded in any inquiry—those of both the teacher and the students—and does even less to address the problem of colonisation in philosophy, perpetuated through its norms of rationality and epistemic marginalisation—both forms of epistemic violence.

Drawing on critical race theory, Chetty makes the following point regarding 'thinking about race', which problematises the assumption of safety:

> There may be an assumption on the part of P4C practitioners that fantastic tales are a better way of thinking about race and culture than real-life situations. It may be that they offer the comfort of distance or that they encourage a dispassionate approach to philosophising. However, it is questionable who is being comforted here. Are we to assume that children are incapable of serious thought about the real world?
>
> (p. 25)

Chetty further notes that if our concern is to promote dialogic inquiry, we need to acknowledge that for the marginalised and oppressed there is no safe space. Inquiry derived from purpose-written stimulus material—such as the IAPC stories-as-text—fails to question the history of Western rationality or take notice of the other ways of knowing it silences.

These criticisms point to the problems with philosophy writ large, which have implications for the teacher's role as facilitator and co-inquirer. Philosophy, MacColl (1994) contends, 'is deeply and thoroughly imbued with an implicitly male orientation masked in various ways as abstract, universal or neutral', which 'infects its ideals, argumentation, issues, methodology and limitations' (p. 7). Relating this concern to Philosophy for Children and classroom practice, she asks 'would you wish on women or small girls a practice of philosophy which you yourself have come to see as deeply imbued with disguised, gendered ideals and associations?' (p. 6). Further, Terri Field (1995, 1997) notes a general lack of feminist analysis in Philosophy for Children. She argues that traditional philosophy, with its established dualisms (e.g., mind/body, reason/emotion, masculinity/femininity, subjectivity/objectivity), devalues and excludes the somatic, affective, and imaginative from philosophical investigation, and constructs practical barriers for women to partake in philosophy so conceived. Philosophy for Children, on the other hand, she thinks, is not wholly characteristic of Western philosophy, as the community of inquiry can alleviate masculine and other epistemic biases because it appeals to a *deliberative* rather than *adversarial* method of questioning and reasoning. Her claim, however, comes with a caution that theory may not so easily translate into classroom practice, as biases are prevalent in societal attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices, which teachers are unlikely to readily leave at the classroom door. I will return to this criticism in greater detail in the next chapter, where I argue that it is not enough to talk about the potential of the community of inquiry to detect epistemic bias, prejudices, or assumptions; after all, to bring out its potential requires teachers to be aware of the obstacles to inquiry, including their own prejudices, values, beliefs, and assumptions that they do not think to question. Whenever a teacher enters a classroom, they are modelling something, both consciously and unconsciously, to differing degrees, whether it be a certain attitude to the curriculum content or a way of engaging with students or a method of inquiry, modelling behaviours and attitudes cannot be avoided and, therefore, should, to the greatest extent possible, be consciously undertaken.

The issues identified in this section, issues related to epistemic bias and exclusion, illustrate the need for educators to be aware of epistemic challenges when facilitating a community of inquiry or selecting stimulus material. Epistemic violence is a major obstacle to self-correcting inquiry and, therefore, an obstacle to the correction of social institutions in a democracy. As I have argued earlier, the corrective capability of democracy is necessary for addressing social and ecological injustices. I will return to these issues in Chapter 7 in relation to Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, Land as pedagogy, and environmental education, but before I do, in the next section, I explore the important role of Peirce's pragmatism in the community of inquiry pedagogy, which through a focus on genuine doubt helps to collapse the reason/emotion dualism, before introducing Bleazby's work on social reconstruction learning. Bleazby's work provides a pedagogical

strategy for engaging students in communities of inquiry that are infused with practical activities and is necessary for the resolution of the problematic theory/practice dualism. It is also a return to the Deweyan roots of Philosophy for Children.

### The felt experience of doubt: mitigating prejudices

As we saw earlier, Spivak uses the term epistemic violence to mark the silencing of marginalised groups through the privileging of the dominant colonial discourse. Epistemic violence is a self-perpetuating societally structuring force that is active at all levels of human organisation in colonial countries, including education. It manifests in educational environments, such as traditional classroom settings and practices, in the caurriculum, classroom resources, and the prejudices and assumptions teachers and students have about the Other. Inquiry-based pedagogy is not exempt as it, too, must mitigate epistemic disparities, mitigation which relies on the participants being aware of their own prejudices and those of others. To move the community of inquiry towards a more epistemically just form of inquiry, I argue requires, in the first instance, a greater emphasis on its pragmatist roots in practice.

Lipman and Sharp (1978) acknowledged that pragmatist epistemology is pivotal to their pedagogy, specifically the practice of fallibilism and self-correction, drawn from Peirce's thoughts on the norms of scientific inquiry (Burgh & Thornton, 2016a, 2016b, 2022; Gregory, 2022; Pardales & Girod, 2006), and Dewey's ideas on education from which they extrapolated pedagogical guidelines (Lipman, 2004). Peirce rejected certainty as indubitable knowledge, which he believed to be exemplified in Descartes' *cogito* in his philosophical treatise *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Indeed, Peirce 'believed that philosophy had gone awry with its adoption of a Cartesian view of knowledge' (Pardales & Girod, 2006, p. 300; see also Seixas, 1993). Unlike Descartes, he did not commit to the belief that 'we could divorce our body from our mind, or our experiences and emotions from our thoughts' (Burgh & Thornton, 2016b, p. 168). He questioned Descartes' sincerity, thinking that he feigned, rather than felt, doubt in order to settle on certainty. Peirce's rejection of Cartesian foundationalism leads to living with uncertainty, which did not disturb him in the same way as it did Descartes. Living with uncertainty can mean breaking free from our habits of belief that inhibit inquiry to test to see if new beliefs better suit the circumstances that brought us into doubt.

To critique Descartes' position, Peirce posited two types of doubt, genuine doubt and paper doubt. Paper doubt is questioning divorced from the *feeling* of doubt. It lacks what Peirce describes as positive reasons for doubt, as it is without the 'heavy and noble metal' of genuine doubt associated with the desire to question. Indeed, Peirce considered Descartes' meditations to be an exemplar of paper doubt. Seated by the fire in his bathrobe with book in hand, supposedly free from passions, Descartes' doubt 'is mere self-deception

and not real doubt at all because no-one can ever strip bare of all prejudices of thought' (Burgh & Thornton, 2016b, p. 168). In Peirce's (1868) words, a person may

> find reason to doubt what he began by believing; but in that case he doubts because he has a positive reason for it, and not on account of the Cartesian maxim. Let us not pretend to doubt in philosophy what we do not doubt in our hearts.
>
> (pp. 140–141)

By assuming a position of emptiness—freedom from prejudices in the form of total scepticism—under Peirce's definition, Descartes failed to engage in genuine inquiry because he failed to both acknowledge and question his own prejudices.

Peirce argued that if absolute truth and certainty did, indeed, reside in individual consciousness (i.e., introspection), then we should have been convinced with reasoning, rather than requiring an individual test of certainty akin to the Cartesian maxim, which is tantamount to '[w]hatever I am convinced of, is true' (p. 141). Claiming individuals to be absolute judges of truth is equivalent to claiming that metaphysics has reached certainty beyond that of the physical sciences. Indeed, according to Peirce, for any theory of reality to be reliable requires the rigors of the scientific method, hence his insistence on the importance of a community of inquirers as an active learning community. Once a theory has been broached, the scientific method requires agreement and 'it is considered to be on probation until this agreement is reached. After it is reached, the question of certainty becomes an idle one, because there is no one left who doubts it' (p. 141).

The shift away from individual certitude to a reliance on the scientific method necessitates an attitude of fallibilism. Not to be mistaken for total doubt or scepticism, which 'can only paralyse action', an attitude of fallibilism means having to adopt the 'scientific spirit' which 'requires a man to be at all times ready to dump his whole cartload of beliefs, the moment experience is against them' (Peirce, 1960, p. 55). For Peirce (1899/1998), fallibilism's refusal of absolute certainty is tantamount to the refusal to set up barriers to inquiry. As he put it:

> Upon this first, and in one sense this sole, rule of reason, that in order to learn you must desire to learn, and in so desiring not be satisfied with what you already incline to think, there follows one corollary which itself deserves to be inscribed upon every wall of the city of philosophy: Do not block the way of *inquiry*.
>
> (p. 48)

Put another way, the first rule is *to wonder*. For Peirce, genuine doubt is the seed for wonder, accompanied by the desire to learn, which mitigates resistance

to inquiry. Unlike paper doubt, genuine doubt requires us to genuinely *experience* doubt—a persistently irritating quality or state of disequilibrium that drives us to seek satisfaction in belief. It is 'the experiential alarm signalling the need for a revision of one's hypothesis' (Hildebrand, 1996, p. 3).

It should be noted that, for Peirce, scientific inquiry includes all discipline-based inquiry (e.g., science, history, mathematics, philosophy), the results of which become content knowledge for learning areas of the curriculum. By virtue of its logic and method of investigation, scientific inquiry 'sets the standards and the justification for the construction of reliable knowledge', insofar as the community of inquirers, who accept the logic and method, act 'as a deliberative jury between doubt and belief about ideas or hypotheses' (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 103).

Because Lipman and Sharp (1978) adapted Peirce's notion of a community of inquirers to education, the pragmatist epistemology that underpins Peirce's philosophy also shapes the community of inquiry and, thus, the inquiry rests on fallibilism, both as a principle and an attitude, necessary for the creation of self-correcting communities of inquiry. As a *principle*, it means that 'no empirical statement is impervious to epistemological challenge' (Powell, 2001, p. 11). As an *attitude*, it is the experience of uncertainty or doubt. Pragmatism rejects certainty and absolute conceptions of truth and reality, thereby relying on genuine doubt as the stimulus for communal inquiry in which collaborative dialogue results in the acceptance of theories that are provisional and subject to further investigation and revision should new reasons for doubt appear. Knowledge, truth, and reality, then, acquire meaning through their grounding in a community of inquirers, as opposed to introspection (Murphy, 1990), or absolute, fixed, and immutable truth. For Peirce, truth cannot be unassailable, it must stay open to the admittance of new evidence and, thus, open to self-correction through further inquiry. He thought that it was only through a process of externalisation of thought, facilitated by rigorous inquiry, that we can reinterpret and then re-internalise our thoughts, thereby changing our beliefs, and by extension, our habitual actions stemming from our initial prejudices. In a dialogic setting such as this, what begins as 'interpersonal interaction becomes an intrapersonal cognitive habit' (Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013, p. 118). Peirce's conception of belief as a cognitive habit, or patterns of action and overt behaviour, can be described as *belief-habits*.

In a classroom setting, a diversity of perspectives is necessary for genuine inquiry, for it is only when students bring different views to the community of inquiry that cooperative intelligence can occur. As Gregory (2005) puts it, '[g]ood inquiry depends on a rich diversity of options—options for beliefs, values and actions—upon which the community may apply its procedures of intelligent selection' (p. 269). But it is often when faced with differing views that we become aware of our own prejudices, prejudices that might otherwise go unrecognised. One of the roles of a community of inquiry, then, is to mitigate prejudice as a barrier to inquiry that hinders self-correction. Peirce

(1899/1998) lists four barriers to inquiry that perpetuate prejudice due to a lack of doubt:

1  absolute assertion,
2  maintaining that something is absolutely unknowable,
3  maintaining that something is absolutely basic, ultimate, independent of all else, and utterly inexplicable, and
4  holding that perfect exactitude is possible, especially that which precludes unusual and anomalous phenomena.

(pp. 49–50)

These barriers, he argues, result in three methods of fixing belief which he refers to as the method of tenacity or refusal to consider contrary evidence, the method of authority or acceptance of institutional dictates, and the method of *a priori* (see Legg, 2014; Peirce, 1878). All three methods stand in opposition to the scientific method, reject fallibilism, and, I argue, fall under the category of philosophical suicide as they are unfounded leaps into certainty.

Conversely, Peirce's conception of a community of inquirers is a rigorous method of intellectual cooperation, a process that moves from disequilibrium (i.e., doubt) to equilibrium (i.e., fixing belief) through a communal struggle to acquire new belief-habits. After such a struggle, we are warranted in accepting the result of our deliberations as 'the most reasonable by account of all available arguments and evidence' (Gregory, 2006, p. 166), but only provisionally, as we need to keep in mind that 'even equilibrium is a temporary state bound to evolve into disequilibrium once again in an ongoing repetitive cycle' (Burgh & Thornton, 2016b, p. 174). Commitment to inquiry of this kind reveals a desire to learn, which, to Peirce, indicates a dissatisfaction with what is already known, a dissatisfaction he deemed genuine doubt. The importance of genuine doubt to classroom inquiry has been explored in a longitudinal study by Elizabeth Fynes-Clinton (2018) that examines the extent to which primary school students engage in reflective thinking within the context of collaborative philosophical inquiry (CPI). The study indicates that students who experienced genuine doubt during the sessions were more inclined to

grapple with ideas to create meaning and to engage in inquiry with others to find ways to explore their ideas. One student's doubt can lead to other students sharing similar doubts, which has the potential to lead to 'collective doubt' that could become a significant indicator of intellectual progress during CPI.

(Burgh, Thornton, & Fynes-Clinton, 2018, p. 53)

Beyond the intellectual progress that attention to genuine doubt promises, the emphasis on trusting and relying on the phenomenological experience of felt doubt to guide discussion and education resists the ideal of reason divorced from emotion that underpins Western conceptions of philosophy, a

major development of which as we saw earlier can be found in Plato. Recall that for Plato, in order to be fully human, emotion must be brought under the control of reason as giving in to your emotions was thought to be a mark of inferiority and irrationality. The experience of genuine doubt as the suspension of a familiar epistemic framework opens the way towards the reconstruction of this framework. Awareness of genuine doubt can encourage inquirers to reflect on the relationship between their feelings and their thoughts, how they relate to each other, and how they shape their belief-habits. The role of the teacher, then, is to facilitate, among other things, genuine doubt.

The relationship between teacher and students in a community of inquiry stands in contrast to the more traditional authoritarian role of the teacher (i.e., the classroom management approach to teaching whereby the teacher has complete teaching and learning control over the classroom). Underlying this shift is a shift in the understanding of knowledge production, that is, in the epistemology of educational theory. Philosophy for Children's pragmatist epistemological underpinnings contrast with authoritarian forms of knowledge as something fixed and static to be delivered and deposited into the child's head, so aptly described by Freire's (2005) banking concept of education. Under a banking model, 'knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry' (p. 72). Conversely, pragmatist epistemology does away with the fixed and static, as Richard Rorty (2000) explains: 'The image of human beings clearing away appearances so as to glimpse reality, thereby getting in touch with something fixed and determinate which has been there all the time, can be dispensed with' (p. 819). A pragmatist teacher is, as Walter Kohan et al. (2017) put it, 'a teacher-as-improvising-philosopher' (p. 259). For the 'freedom of philosophizing is guaranteed by the improvisational nature of dialogue, which transforms the monologue of traditional teaching into an *ex improvise* polyphony, one which emerges without planning, and which does not delimit the direction and meaning of action in advance' (p. 258).

It is Philosophy for Children's pragmatic shift in epistemology that holds the most potential in terms of social and ecological justice, and, therefore, its potential to be an effective pedagogy for environmental education. To this end, in the next section, I look to social reconstruction learning to help collapse the theory/practice, inside/outside dualism still present in the community of pragmatic inquiry.

## Integrating curriculum, pedagogy, and practical learning

Dewey's (1916) naturalistic notion of growth is an interplay between belief-habits and habitats. In contrast to education as the 'unfolding of latent powers from within' (the Platonic view of education as 'leading out') and 'the formation from without' (the reproduction of knowledge of the past), education *is*,

according to Dewey, the constant 'reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience' (p. 76). Through education, as Bleazby (2013) explains: 'the individual and their environment are changed, which in turn causes the individual to interact with the world differently. Consequently, the individual then encounters more unfamiliar situations needing reconstruction, leading to further experience and growth' (p. 43). Growth is, therefore, *a continuous leading into the future*, but, as Dewey (1916) insists, this should not be mistaken for

> attaching importance to preparation for future need, but in making it the mainspring of present effort. Because the need of preparation for a continually developing life is great, it is imperative that every energy should be bent to making the present experience as rich and significant as possible. Then as the present merges insensibly into the future, the future is taken care of.
>
> (p. 56)

This growth as continuous reconstruction of experience increases autonomy—the ability to direct and control our lives. Hence, the future is taken care of in the present; 'what children and adolescents experience today will merge with their experiences tomorrow as active and informed adult citizens' (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 50). Put another way, their belief-habits impact on place (i.e., the location they epistemically inhabit), as ontological assumptions that constitute social realities, which, in turn, impact on their belief-habits, and so forth. Examining the fit between our beliefs, our habits, and our habitat allows for greater ability to reconstruct all three and, hence, greater ability to adapt to a changing world, which, in the next chapter, I will argue is vital for climate change education. Social reconstruction learning, to which I now turn, expands the purview of the community of inquiry by de-emphasises the role of the novels to stimulate discussion and shift the emphasis onto experiential learning and practical activities.

Bleazby (2013) questions why Lipman followed Dewey in his rejection of the theory/practice dualism, and yet the pedagogy and curriculum materials he developed do not include the hands-on, practical problem-solving activities Dewey demanded to engage with real-world problems. She writes:

> Dewey believed disciplinary content should be taught as knowledge, skills, methods and values that were constructed in response to everyday problems—namely, the problem of how to more effectively interact with our social environment. Hence, the reason that in Dewey's [Laboratory] school children would learn geometry in order to build a functioning garden shed; biology in order to effectively grow a kitchen garden; chemistry in order to dye fabrics for a garment; and so on.
>
> (p. 183)

Dewey's (1970) emphasis on experiential learning situates problems where he thought they belonged, within the sociocultural conditions from whence they originated, 'in order to be relevant to present human affairs' (p. xxiii). Under such conditions, Deweyan classrooms function as 'microcosms of democracy not simply because they are self-governing groups but because their modes of self-regulation and self-correcting can be carried over from the smaller groups to the more massive societies' (Lipman, 1998, p. 25). But rather than students actively reconstructing their learning environment through practical experiential learning activities as Dewey intended, Philosophy for Children relies on 'the shared reading of a narrative, containing philosophically puzzling ideas, followed by a classroom communal inquiry initiated by student questions and responses to the text' (p. 156). Both Lipman and Sharp presuppose that the ideas, methods, and solutions the students develop as a community of inquiry will result in the reconstruction of their experiences and, therefore, their behaviours, but there is no expectation to apply them to 'real world' problems outside the classroom, to test them as part of the inquiry process (p. 157). For example, identifying actual cases of injustice in the school, like bullying, or in the wider community, and subsequently taking 'action to transform the unjust situation in some way' (p. 157).

Bleazby concludes that Philosophy for Children 'has not fully overcome the problematic theory/practice, mind/body, thought/action, abstract/concrete dualisms inherent in traditional education and epistemology', as the reconstruction of experience requires the simultaneous use of concrete, abstract, practical, theoretical, experiential, reasonable, emotional and imaginative capacities (p. 157). While Lipman intended that the reconstruction of students' experiences transfer beyond the classroom, it is puzzling that he did not insist on students testing and applying ideas to their experiences in the greater community using the principles of experiential education, with an emphasis on experimentation, inquiry, and reflection as Dewey did in his Laboratory School in Chicago.[3] Bleazby is correct to say that '[d]ialogue, as important as it is, does not constitute transformative action, application or changed behaviour' (p. 157). Indeed, the original IAPC curriculum 'avoids substantive issues of immediate concern to students by creating a totally artificial environment, rather than one that uses real cases, as the basis for discussion' (Burgh, Field, & Freakley, 2006, p. 101). It may be the case that students can relate to the fictional characters in novels, but they are decontextualised in problematic ways, as Chetty and Murris have shown. It appears that Lipman assumes that students will naturally transfer their experiences 'from classroom discussion into their lives outside of school, rather than giving them actual experiences of problematising situations within the context that they occur' (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 117).

By focusing the community of inquiry on the world of fictional characters, rather than the world outside of the classroom, Lipman undermines his own claim that the community of inquiry is an exemplar of democracy in action. As Bleazby (2013) puts it, Dewey's 'notion of democracy that P4C embraces

necessitates intercultural inquiry. The classroom Community of Inquiry must engage in inquiry with diverse communities beyond the classroom in order to be democratic in this sense' (p. 159). Failure to do so leads to another problem:

> Since P4C participants do not have to take action, there is nothing to really stop them from going around in circles, endlessly criticising, rejecting arguments and opinions and settling for relativism. Questioning and being critical is good but not if it merely leads to indecisiveness, a lack of practicality, a constant search for perfect solutions or a failure to come up with positive theories and ideas that enable transformative action.
>
> (p. 160)

Bleazby's solution is to introduce service learning to Philosophy for Children. She uses the term 'social reconstruction learning' to capture Dewey's notion of experiential education to differentiate it from traditional approaches to service learning and to capture 'the critical, collaborative, reciprocal, inquiry-based and transformative action that characterises the critical approach' (p. 179), she favours.

Just as it is surprising that Lipman jettisoned Dewey's emphasis on learning through doing, it is equally surprising that Dewey omitted to reconstruct philosophy for the school curriculum. As Bleazby (2013) has noted, it is especially curious 'given that the other disciplines included on the Laboratory School curriculum had to be similarly reconstructed so as to draw out their concrete, social, practical, imaginative and emotional aspects' (p. 185). Social reconstruction learning rectifies both Dewey's and Lipman's oversights, through the integration of philosophy and service learning, informed by 'clear pedagogical procedures and curriculum content that can actively foster the communal inquiry necessary for effective social reconstruction' (p. 188). To do this, the community of inquiry is 'extended to include relevant members of the community who would be considered equal participants in the classroom inquiry' (p. 181). A social reconstruction curriculum needs to start with a broad issue, and link to key philosophical concepts, which have educational and practical benefits, thus, providing students with opportunities to 'move between philosophical texts and theories and analyses of concrete social problems or case studies, with the overriding aim of articulating the causes and nature problem and identifying some possible transformative action that may be taken' (p. 187). Thus, students engaged in social reconstruction learning are provided with valuable opportunities to experience bringing about social change. In doing so, it has the potential to have a direct effect on the participants' individual and social identity, an observation Bleazby and Slade (2019) make in the following passage:

> The interest in such [applied] philosophy seems to mirror the myriad of pressing issues facing humanity (e.g., global warming, extremism

and terrorism, the refugee crisis, global inequality, and threats posed by modern technologies). Advocates of P4C ought to take advantage of this, emphasising P4C's ability to foster the skills and knowledge that people need in order to effectively interact with such a complex, diverse, and rapidly changing environment (e.g., communal inquiry skills; moral reasoning; and theories of democracy, rights, truth, the good, justice, etc.).

(p. 227)

In Chapter 7, I explore how place-based education can provide social reconstruction learning with a place-responsive pedagogical dimension and, thus, connect education to ecology. In relation to environmental education, community projects would address environmental issues at the local level, to encourage the development of ecologically minded students by attending to the human/nature dualism, which has created a stark separation between culture and nature that often carries over to the classroom. As social reconstruction learning is a kind of place-based experiential education, students can develop a 'sense of place' as they become aware of their relationship to place, its colonial histories, the Indigenous stories inscribed into the ancient landscapes, and future imaginings, which include urban planning and political responses to social and ecological issues. I will speak more on the importance of 'place' as a site for experiential learning in the next chapter, where I link place and epistemology together to further collapse the human/nature dualism by focusing on the importance of returning to the community of inquiry's pragmatist roots, particularly genuine doubt, to shift classroom prejudice, mitigate epistemic violence, and aid in the reconstruction of education. Re-emphasising the centrality of the community of inquiry's pragmatist roots is crucial for overcoming prejudices, by starting inquiry not from the 'ideal' experiences of fictional characters (Murris, 2016) but by drawing the participants' attention to their own prejudices in order to open a pathway towards genuine doubt and the reconstruction of belief. By doing so, I seek to redress the general lack of emphasis on the epistemological foundations of Philosophy for Children to inform effective facilitation of epistemic violence in the classroom, the effects of which largely go undetected.

## Conclusion

Philosophy for Children is founded on the view that theories of classroom practice, as well as curriculum materials, need to be attentive to the concerns of children and adolescents, and, therefore, the larger social and political issues from which their concerns arise. Further, the concerns raised in this chapter, around race and gender stereotyping, bias, and language in curriculum materials, illustrate the need to address diverse lived experiences of race/ethnicity, sex/gender, sexual orientation, and other social categories to mitigate epistemic exclusion and marginalisation, and the need for educators to be aware

of epistemic challenges when selecting stimulus material or facilitating a community of inquiry.

To redress the problem of curriculum bias requires more than finding appropriate stimulus materials that reflect the realities of people's lived experiences of abstract social categories such as sex, race, age, or social status. De-emphasising the role of stories, such as purpose-written philosophical stories-as-text, picture books, or other materials based on fictional characters to stimulate dialogical inquiry and substituting them with stimulus materials that depict the socio-political realities of different groups can be effective, but to fully immerse students in such realities requires experiential learning that engages students with local communities. In doing so, curriculum synthesis, can be achieved through practical activities and dialogical inquiry facilitated by teachers in collaboration with members of the community on a project that reconstructs the participants lived experiences.

## Notes

1  For a more detailed discussion on the concerns of feminists in Philosophy for Children, see Thornton and Burgh (2019).
2  In the Philosophy for Children literature, the role of the teacher as facilitator has been described variously. For example, as 'a teacher-as-improvising-philosopher', meaning 'composing in the moment one's own way of thinking, being sensitive to, and affirming difference, and being a teacher in process' (Kohan, Santi & Wozniak, 2017, p. 259), and as self-liberator and enabler of 'epistemic justice in order to ensure perspectival multiplicity, multiple identities, and the legitimization of difference characterized by pedagogy of search' (Kizel, 2021, p. 1).
3  Confusingly, the term 'experiential education' has become a category for any model of education that is considered 'hands-on learning', 'learning by doing', or 'learning through experience'. This has made it 'difficult to distinguish between those educational practices that retain Deweyan roots and those adapting a much broader idea of experience as central to the educational process' (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 80).

# 7    A pedagogy of lucidity

## Introduction

We live in a world increasingly defined by the social and ecological disasters we face, such as species extinction, poverty, war, and perhaps most pressingly, climate change with its ever-increasing attendant natural disasters. It is a world in which climate scientists have long been vocal in urging governments to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while also alerting the public to the dangers of climate change in an attempt to educate the citizenry and counter deceptive and well-funded media campaigns and conspiracy theories that fuel the spread of misinformation. The youth of today, those with the most to lose from rising emissions, are increasingly joining scientists in calling for immediate action to mitigate the worst effects of climate change. As the global temperature increases, so too does their frustration, sadness, and anger at the slow pace of political action, evident in activist efforts, such as Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg's *Skolstrejk för klimatet* (School strike for climate).

Preparing students, from children to young adults, to face the challenges of climate change, is one of the most pressing tasks for education in a time of environmental crisis. However, educating students as to the enormity of the threat also carries the risk of triggering existential crises. Indeed, terms such as 'ecological grief', 'environmental grief', 'climate grief', 'climate anxiety', 'Solastalgia' (Albrecht, 2006), 'eco-guilt', and 'ecologies of guilt' (Jensen, 2019) have sprung up in research along with a plethora of news articles reporting a sense of loss regarding our relationship with nature, and a sense of heightened anxiety regarding the increasing uncertainty of our individual and collective future. The increased frequency of extreme weather events is one reason for this trend. For example, the size and scale of the 2019 bushfires in Australia briefly turned the world's attention to the interplay between the ecological and human tragedies caused by climate change. Shortly afterwards, Australian children's book author, Jackie French (2020), penned a piece for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, in which she writes of the school students in her local fire-affected community: 'Every child had either watched fire rage and flicker round their house or has a best friend who is still white-faced and silent' (n.p.).

Environmental education is, therefore, crucial for preparing young people to face the climate change affected world as it is and as it will be. However, the picture presented to young people must be a complete picture of climate change that addresses not only the historical, geographical, socio-political, and ecological considerations required to mitigate and adapt to climate change but also the ethical challenges and emotional impacts. Yet another reason to collapse dualisms including the reason/emotion dualism.

The community of inquiry, if aimed at the reconstruction of education and, ultimately, social reconstruction, can provide an educational framework capable of preparing students to face an uncertain future, emotionally and intellectually, thanks to its grounding in pragmatism epistemology. As such, it holds a disruptive potential as pedagogy for the development of eco-rational education, which I will argue here is crucial for developing the kind of ecologically minded citizens needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The value of philosophy as collaborative, inquiry-based learning cannot be overstated, not only because its Socratic roots are grounded in praxis or thoughtful life practice but also because philosophy can thrive on doubt, and, hence, a philosophical outlook can increase students' abilities to creatively adapt in the face of uncertainty. Incorporating the practice of philosophy as a pedagogical strategy for environmental education can, therefore, encourage behavioural change and inspire students to become more engaged with their communities and local ecology.

Another important part of an eco-rational education is an ability to counter the epistemic violence and subsequent social and ecological injustices that stem from the colonial structures and Eurocentric discourses that have dominated educational theory and practice, as well as social and political institutions generally. These discourses are underpinned by eco-irrational thinking marked by an inability to self-correct and, consequently, an inability to politically adapt to the ecological crises they have helped create. Eco-irrationality carries through traditional education where it places emphasis on educating the outsider, rather than educating the insider. Reversing this order and placing emphasis on educating the insider is, therefore, a way of halting the perpetuation of dominant logic. To educate the insider, the colonial identity, a conversation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is needed, facilitated through reflective engagement with Indigenous socio-political concepts that have been epistemically silenced, with the view to developing new logics, relations, and belief-habits capable of mitigating the effects of the current environmental crisis and create new political identities that are ecologically informed and adaptable. To achieve this, I argue, requires an emphasis not only on the epistemic aspects of inquiry but also on experiential learning that is sensitive to both habit and habitat, which I call lucid inquiry, to synthesise curriculum, pedagogy, and practical learning activities. The goal of this final chapter is to illustrate the climate necessary for an eco-rational education robust enough to prepare students for an uncertain future, the first step of which is to reintegrate emotion.

### Lucidity: emotion, myth, and imagination

While Camus' and Descartes' respective responses to the problem of existence contrast with each other, they share a methodological similarity, a similarity that has been commented on by scholars such as Matthew Sharpe (2011) and Thomas Williams, Jr. (1964). Indeed, Camus (1977b) makes note of the similarity himself when speaking of the absurd as 'an *experience* to be lived through, a point of departure, the equivalent, in existence, of Descartes' methodical doubt' (p. 8, *italics* added). Camus' comment points to a separation between experiential and theoretical doubt in a way similar to that of Peirce's separation of paper doubt from genuine doubt.

Also akin to Peirce, Camus rejects Descartes' epistemic foundationalism. For both, there is no Cartesian dualism of human essence and the world, as they discard the idea of the mind as an inner space capable of directly apprehending clear and distinct ideas through introspection. Whereas Descartes understood doubting as proof of thinking, which he takes to be proof of existence, Camus (1977a) takes *feeling* to be foundational to existence: 'This heart within me I can *feel*, and I judge that it exists' (p. 13, *italics* added). The absurd is Camus' datum point, his 'point of departure'. However, recognition of the absurd springs from the feeling and accompanying recognition of being alive, along with the feeling of a world that is much greater than we are, but of which we are, nonetheless, a small part. It is the feeling of absurdity that begins Camus' methodology: 'The worm is in the man's heart. That is where it must be sought' (p. 13). To be lucid we must not only understand the absurd intellectually but also experientially. Camus' emphasis on feeling as foundational, rather than antithetical to reasoning, collapses the reason/emotion dualism set up by traditional forms of rationality.

Plumwood (2002), as we have seen, deems traditional rationality to be 'sado-dispassionate' and 'ecologically irrational'. She uses the term sado-dispassionate to critique the subject/object divide present in traditional reason. 'Objectivity', she says, 'is usually seen as excluding the emotional, the bodily, the particular, the personal, and of course especially the "political"' (p. 42). Collapsing the subject/object and resulting reason/emotion dualism is an important part of establishing an ecological form of rationality. If injustices and misconceptions, especially mastery over nature, women, and Indigenous peoples, follow from, as Hyde (2016) describes it,

> an indefensible and objectionable conception of rationality one that contrasts itself with emotion then, amongst other consequences, another that follows is that *reason and emotion are not discontinuous opposites.* Each is, to some extent at least, a part of the other. Moreover, reason cannot, as has been the case, simply be assumed to be superior to emotion. *Emotions must play a central role in how we view the world alongside reason.*
>
> (p. 7, *italics* added)

Camus can help us to collapse the dualism between reason and emotion and reinstate the elements excluded by 'objectivity', by providing a starting point for a different kind of reason, an absurd reasoning, beginning with the *feeling* of absurdity as the first part of a method of lucidity.

To return to Camus' (1977a) form of ethics, as covered previously, he holds that '[t]he absurd mind cannot so much expect *ethical rules* at the *end of its reasoning* as, rather, *illustrations* and *the breath of human lives*' (p. 65, *italics* added). For a philosopher who does away with absolute truth, it may come as no surprise that Camus also dispenses with 'ethical rules' in favour of 'illustrations'. Myths, he insists, are made for the 'imagination to breathe life into them' (p. 108). We can understand this in two ways. First, in the case of myths of reversals, the meaning of 'to breathe life into them' is more than metaphorical; the epistemology creates a lived reality, one that often results in suffering, loss of life, and loss of meaning. Ironically, these myths often come replete with 'ethical rules' designed to control, assimilate, and 'civilise', as we saw in previous chapters. Myths of reversal echo Spivak's (1990) textuality as 'worlding of a world' on what has been proclaimed 'uninscribed territory', such as the decree of *Terra Nullius*, which provided colonisers with the means to inscribe British law upon Indigenous lands. On the topic of worlding she writes:

> I am thinking basically about the imperialist project which had to assume that the earth that it territorialised was in fact previously uninscribed. So then a world, on a simple level of cartography, inscribes what was presumed to be uninscribed. Now this worlding actually is also a texting, textualising, a making into art, a making into an object to be understood.
>
> (p. 1)

In other words, worlding is a process of transforming a space into a colonised space through acts such as writing, myth making, passing laws, and erecting statues and structures, and, as a result, it brings a constructed world into being, one that is considered certain, fixed, and final. The structure of this world is then transmitted via education so that the next generation works to perpetuate its existence, making it seem 'natural' as if it had been that way all along.

Second, myths can be used to the opposite effect; to disrupt and help rewrite worldings. The myth of Sisyphus, which Camus used to demonstrate the importance of life, that meaning does not transcend life but rather arises from it and can, therefore, be created by the living is one example. These myths are 'illustrations' in that they serve as examples of, rather than command, ethical ways of being. Their very existence can break the illusion of 'natural' upon which 'worldings' rely. Used in this way, myths can expand the ethical imagination and help prevent philosophical suicide, including the leap into sado-dispassionate reasoning, another form of heavenism.

Myths blur the line between fiction and non-fiction, text and territory, and creation and destruction insofar as they can be used to either create meaning or to destroy it. The latter is not thought to be in opposition to creation, as

destruction itself is a part of the act of creating; think of the mark of the brush destroying the pristine white of the canvas, or more broadly, the destruction of the tree to create the frame upon which the canvas is stretched. Destruction calls the creation into question, not necessarily to negate its value but, at the very least, to be considered alongside it. How are myths to be judged? Camus (1964) tells us that acts of creation can be valued 'only in relation to their repercussions on living people' (p. 9), and here, with the help of Plumwood, we might extend this to include all living things. The ethical limit Camus sets is similar to Plumwood's ethico-epistemic proposition which, as explained in Chapter 2, holds that 'knowledges that involve injustice to those who are known do not provide accurate or ethically acceptable forms of knowledge' (p. 44). It is not enough to say that morality is to be found in either consequence or intent, as it lies in both. For Camus, the consequence we must be ethically aware of is suffering as a shared feature of the world, but not merely the reductionist suffering of the pain response. His conception of suffering is shared rather than individualist, in a way similar to that laid out by Guenther in Chapter 5, because 'from the moment rebellion begins, suffering is seen as a collective experience—as the experience of everyone' (p. 28).[1] Such suffering can be epistemic or physical and the intent behind the consequence can be traced in the movement from the 'textualising' to the 'worlding', to use Spivak's terms, or explained through Plumwood's conception of a sado-dispassionate logic of domination. To begin to undo sado-dispassionate reasoning, Plumwood tells us we must decentre the human in the world and account for the non-human. Similarly, to arrive at a shared appreciation of life, including the conditions under which life thrives, we must, Camus thinks, *reason from the breath*. On my reading, this is *lucidity*, an appreciation of the limits of reason towards the preservation and encouragement of all life.

The concept of lucidity as sustained awareness of the absurd, when applied to teaching can inform teacher understanding of the epistemic dynamics of communal inquiry as continuous reconstruction. Lucid inquiry requires teachers to maintain an awareness of their dual roles as (i) a co-inquirer who has a greater understanding than the students of how knowledge is constructed in the scholarly/disciplinary inquiries that have generated knowledge imported as facts into curriculum content (i.e., subjects and learning area clusters, as well as textbooks), and (ii) the facilitator of a community of inquiry whose foremost pedagogical task is to cultivate collective doubt so that 'students begin to understand their own fallibility and further to this, embrace absurdity' (Burgh, Thornton, & Fynes-Clinton, 2018, p. 59). To do this requires teachers to maintain a tension between a feeling of perplexity and lucid reflection, 'as the stimulus for communal inquiry in which collaborative dialogue results in the acceptance of theories that are provisional and subject to further investigation and revision' (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, pp. 9–10).

The alignment between pragmatist and absurdist thinking comes from the recognition of the experience of disorientation, which for Peirce is the felt experience of genuine doubt and for Camus is the methodological doubt of the

absurd, leading to the need to act on that experience, but in accordance with a specific method of lucidity. Recall, for Peirce genuine doubt means avoiding the temptation to uncritically remove the unsettling feeling through methods of tenacity, authority, or *a priori* and to instead employ scientific inquiry as the warranted method for fixing belief. Camus sought to avoid the leap of faith that is philosophical suicide and to remain within the absurd by recognising a limit to reason. Combining Peirce's and Camus' epistemological insights offers a richer conception of what it means to inquire in a world in which we have no access to absolute truth and yet wish to avoid nihilism and the undoing of all ethical limits. These two positions, while from different philosophical traditions, provide an account of inquiry as a process of sustained attention to the gap between feelings of disequilibrium and equilibrium. Such attention can shift a person's reliance on past narratives and the prejudices they create, thereby allowing for the mitigation of epistemic violence and the reimagining of belief-habits and the habitats which they help shape. A lucid inquirer examines their own biases, accounts for the knowledge of marginalised others, bases inquiry on the feeling of genuine doubt, and questions the structures built by dominant logic. In the next section I argue that this dimension of Camus' work can be development further, through Plumwood's notion of traitorous identities.

To conclude this section, lucid inquiry and the pedagogical principles that inform it are intended to act as guidelines for inquiry, to capture what Denton saw as a new primary objective for education based on the salient features of Camus' philosophy, namely, the development of lucid individuals who live the philosophy of limits. As the moral individual, for Camus, is the lucid individual, a pedagogy of lucidity aims to facilitate the tensions between meaning-seeking humans and a meaningless world without leaping into relativism. Lucid inquiry has the potential to disrupt frameworks of familiarity; habits that create obstacles to inquiry, and which often have socio-ecological repercussions, habits that we need to re-examine in the light of ongoing environmental crises and injustices.

## Traitorous identities: disrupting epistemic violence in colonised classrooms

Plumwood (1993a) contends that the classic liberal notion of the political individual is one of exclusion in which the 'self-interested individual employs a conception of reason as the use of both other humans and the world generally as a means to their satisfaction, which is assumed to be the satisfaction of interests in which others play no essential role' (p. 151). Built on liberal foundations, education as a tool for nation building in colonial countries is a site for the perpetuation of epistemic violence, a site of present-day assimilationist projects. As Plumwood (2002) argues, the logic of unity which underlies assimilation is another form of the logic of domination. The incorporative self, she posits, 'uses unity in a hegemonic fashion to absorb the other or recreate them as a version of the self' (p. 203). As the colonising project is founded

on self-imposition and appropriation, 'the incorporative self of the colonising mind is insensitive to the other's independence and boundaries, denying the other's right to define their own reality, name their own history, and establish their own identity' (p. 203). The incorporative self is marked by an inability or unwillingness to recognise the limits of the Other and, therefore, an inability to self-correct when such limits have been exceeded. Often, initial unwillingness can set the stage for the creation of cultural norms, narratives, and values resulting in a systemic inability to recognise limits.

In response to this problem, environmental philosophers, such as Arne Naess, and those who have followed him in the deep ecology movement have argued for an identification of self with all others, both human and non-human. While deep ecology shares with Plumwood's philosophy a commitment to support the reproductive capacity of natural systems, she contends that rather than being an alternative to the incorporative self, it is merely another form of incorporation through 'the definition of the other in terms of the self's realm of agency' (p. 155). Treating the Other, human or non-human, as part of the self, is another form of assimilation. By bringing the Other into the self all difference is collapsed and denied.

Rather than Naess' insistence on the development of a self, unified with nature, which subtly extends human centrism and abolishes difference, or a liberal self, as hyper-separated from Other, Plumwood argues for a third way that accounts for both difference and unity, namely, the development of traitorous kinds of human identities. Traitorous identities involve 'a revised conception of the self and its relation to the non-human other, opposition to oppressive practices, and the abandonment and critique of cultural allegiances to the dominance of the human species and its bonding against non-humans' (p. 205). In other words, a traitorous identity is characterised as having a relational identity and existing within a framework that does not starkly separate the human from the non-human while also recognising difference. Such identities would understand the need for the recognition of Other along with current and historical oppressions, take responsibility for the impact of their actions, and show generosity, respect, empathy, and inclusion. Developing ecological identities in the classroom requires teachers to model them, to be aware of the thread connecting past and current oppression, and to recognise and mitigate the harm caused by epistemic violence as a result of classroom structures, implementation of curriculum, selection of materials, and classroom interactions.

Rainville (2001) highlights the importance of the recognition of historical oppression in education. She argues that education cannot be *neutral*, and that teachers must understand the historical and political forces that shape the lives of their students, especially those to whom history has been oppressive. To this end, she argues that teachers need to

> acknowledge their own (inevitable) biases, as well as the conceptual limitations of their chosen material, while paying particular attention to the political contexts in which education takes place. As a result, Philosophy

for Children must be willing to incorporate historical detail and socio-cultural awareness into any programs which are meant to be truly liberatory.

(p. 67)

While many proponents of Philosophy for Children attest to its potential to reform education, Rainville highlights a notable silence within this approach to education:

I have yet to read a paper in the growing body of Philosophy for Children literature which acknowledges the ways in which our so-called democratic institutions have arisen out of, and continue to perpetuate, the political, economic and ideological repression of Native North Americans.

(p. 66)

She expresses concern that Philosophy for Children's 'purportedly neutral approach to philosophical inquiry may unwittingly contribute to the marginalization of Indigenous peoples both in North America and around the world' (p. 67). Her concern over the 'neutrality' of education is echoed by Kohan (2018), who, following Freire's moral condemnation of neutrality, contends that '[e]ducation cannot be apolitical, politically neutral or aseptic' (p. 7).

Claiming that education must be neutral is a way of silencing the Other without admitting a standpoint, hiding behind the mask of neutrality, a neutrality that is anything but neutral. This putative but false neutrality is set up to protect the dominant narrative, an attempt to place it beyond reproach. Such a move, for example, is sometimes evident in teacher concerns over climate change education. Teachers' often expressed horror at the suggestion of teaching students about climate change reflects the desire to protect the insular perspective of the community in which they are embedded by adopting a position of neutrality. Whether conscious or not, the privileged nature of such a desire is evident if we think of communities the world over which are unable to hold such a perspective; climate refugees, or drought, flood, and fire affected communities, for example. Many Indigenous peoples also do not have the luxury of choosing not to teach about climate change. As Kyle Whyte (2017) argues, 'anthropogenic climate change is an intensified repetition of anthropogenic environmental change inflicted on Indigenous peoples via colonial practices that facilitated capitalist industrial expansion' (p. 156). Attempts at neutrality can also be motivated by concern over the charge of indoctrination. However, this concern is unwarranted, as indoctrination is teaching with the intent that students accept certain 'propositions regardless of the evidence' (Snook, 1972, p. 100).

Typically, teachers only have this intent when they want to persuade students to adopt beliefs that are not well-supported by empirical evidence or reasons. In such cases, since they cannot persuade students using reasons, they may resort to non-rational methods, e.g. emotional manipulation,

including fear and charm; peer pressure; misrepresenting contentious beliefs as facts; deliberately omitting counter evidence. Clearly climate change educators do not need to resort to such methods because there is extensive scientific evidence and compelling reasons that they should use to persuade students. Teachers should want students to accept anthropogenic climate change *because of the evidence*, not regardless of it.

(Bleazby et al., 2022, pp. 3–4)

Some of the confusion surrounding climate change education can be linked to another area in which false claims of neutrality abound—media representations of climate change. Climate change science is often reported by the media as a debate between those scientists who are 'for' and 'against' climate change, loosely configured to be able to change the meaning of the terms at will. For example, 'for' could mean acknowledgement of the very existence of climate change, and 'against' the denial of its occurrence. But 'for' could also mean accepting anthropogenic climate change and 'against' meaning that climate change is due to natural processes rather than human activities. These false oppositions, often presented as debates for the purpose of political 'neutrality', do not, however, offer a nuanced look at the science, but present the research as if it were split equally between positions, which is far from the case. The evidence overwhelmingly points to climate change occurring due to human activity, and for decades scientists have warned of the dangers of inaction caused by the continual presentation of the topic as an 'impartial' debate, not the least of which is the general lack of understanding of the scope and severity of the problem. Denying the existence or extent of climate change, in the media and in schools, helps keep the colonial engines burning and the narrative skewed towards destruction.

Just as it can be difficult or even painful to learn about sexism or racism within our culture and potentially within ourselves (hooks, 2014, p. 102), it can be painful to learn about our culture's tendency towards self-destruction through environmental degradation. bell hooks description of the discussions she had with her students regarding sexism and racism ring true also for teaching climate change and could, perhaps, inform the way teachers approach a subject that is both sensitive and vital to students' futures:

We talked about how we perceive pain, about our society's approach to pain, considering the possibility that this pain could be a constructive sign of growth. I shared with them my sense that the experience should not be viewed as static, that at another point the knowledge and new perspectives they had might lead to clarity and a greater sense of well-being.

(p. 103)

As the previous chapter illustrates, the bias against expression of emotion in the classroom is founded on the false dualism of reason over emotion and is

a source of further epistemic violence, a point to which I will shortly return. Facing the emotional dimension of climate change is then another important part of an eco-rational education.

There is no impartiality in avoiding or watering down climate change education, just as there is no impartiality in white-washing or denying history. Both aim at keeping school, which perpetuates the logic of domination by actively backgrounding the historical and present-day context in which the school is situated. Such an approach fails to prepare the younger generation for the future and reinforces the logic of domination's rejection of other ways of knowing, being, and doing in the world. Once again using Australia as an illustration, Aunty Judi Wickes (as cited in Shay & Wickes, 2017), reflecting on her own education, has the following to say:

> How wonderful it would be to gain a fundamental acceptance and affirmation of all races within the Australian landscape; to be judged on one's own merits rather than the colour of your skin. I wish that my school days had delivered a factual curriculum system regarding Australian history and that my educators were of many cultures and not just British. I wonder if a time will come when educators challenge the doctrine of past scholars concerning Australian history, and begin to teach an accurate account of the invasion/colonisation of this country, including the destruction of our Aboriginal people's society?
>
> (p. 117)

In terms of the destruction of Aboriginal society, perhaps even more importantly than the problem of neutrality, is the insistence on the superiority of colonial ways of knowing, being, and doing over all others. Intellectual freedom requires not only an accurate account of invasion but the inclusion of multiple knowledge systems, not simply as topics or issues to critique or criticise, placed in opposition to Western knowledge, but as starting points for lucid inquiry. As Graham (2009) attests, 'Western contemporary technosciences, rather than being taken as definitional of knowledge, rationality, or objectivity, should be treated as varieties of knowledge systems' (p. 75). Failure to include a diversity of knowledge systems, as a matter of inclusive curriculum that encompasses the teaching and learning environment, course content, pedagogy, and assessment practices, fails to interrupt the dominant narrative, leaving it unquestioned, or in Shor and Freire's (1987) words, 'leaving the dominant ideology in peace' (p. 174). Speaking of the larger goal of increasing Australia's understanding of Aboriginal philosophy, Watson (2014) has the following to say as to how to get there:

> The immediate goal would be to reassess practices aimed at inclusion and develop practical possibilities for the centring of Indigenous knowledges. Such a process would go beyond the translation of Aboriginality, which has in most instances been affected by Western expertise and

interpreters, and would enable the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges from a First Nations peoples' standpoint.

(p. 518)

It is essential for all the reasons so far discussed to include Indigenous knowledges in education; however, there exists a real possibility of the inclusion further perpetuating rather than mitigating epistemic violence if teachers are themselves steeped in dominant logic. Speaking of her own academic field of inquiry, Zoe Todd (2016) gives us an example of the kind of colonial consequences of engaging with Indigenous thought without first addressing individually absorbed dominant rationality:

> When anthropologists and other assembled social scientists sashay in and start cherry-picking parts of Indigenous thought that appeal to them *without engaging directly in (or unambiguously acknowledging) the political situation, agency, legal orders and relationality of both Indigenous people and scholars*, we immediately become complicit in colonial violence.
>
> (p. 18)

Plumwood (2012) sought to address the problem of dominant rationality through the development of 'traitorous identities', which, as previously mentioned, are created by focusing lucid attention on 'experiences that do not fit the dominant story' (pp. 12–13). Traitorous identities cultivate an ethical, ecological rationality through constant reflection on the ways in which they habitually interact with the environment and others, looking for the experiences that lie outside of the dominant narrative and seeking to mitigate their own harmful impact on Other including nature. In terms of engaging with Indigenous knowledges, there is an understanding

> that Indigenous thinking must be seen as not just a well of ideas to draw from but a body of thinking that is living and practiced by peoples with whom we all share reciprocal duties as citizens of shared territories (be they physical or the ephemeral).
>
> (p. 17)

Traitorous identities also avoid the four 'traps' as Peter Paul Elicor (2019) calls them. They are the homogenisation of Indigenous philosophy; a tendency to view Indigenous ways of knowing being and doing as static 'cultural artefacts'; appropriation, 'the tendency to universalize, de-historicize or put forward claims that are grounded on a transcultural objectivity'; and, lastly, the 'tendency to use indigenous forms of knowledge as merely complementary' additions to Western forms (p. 8).

Eve Tuck (aka Unangax^) and Yang (2019) note that 'Indigenous and decolonizing perspectives on education have long persisted alongside colonial

models of education, yet too often have been *subsumed* under broader domains of multiculturalism, critical race theory, and progressive education' (p. x, *italics* added). They stress the need to recognise 'Indigenous world-views and decolonizing theory as distinct philosophical traditions' (p. x), and that '[d]ecolonizing studies, when most centered in Indigenous philosophy, push back against assumptions about the linearity of history and the future, against teleological narratives of human development, and argue for renderings of time and place that exceed coloniality and conquest' (p. xiii). Part of pushing back against the colonisation of education, then, requires embedding education in the history of the land on which the classroom and greater community is situated, including the philosophies (i.e., ways of knowing, being, and doing) and practices of the traditional owners of the land; perceptions and conceptions of childhood that disrupt the dominant narrative of liberal individualism; education's role in politics (including aspects of ongoing assimilation); Indigenous approaches to science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM); right down to the impacts of the manufacturing of the glue that holds the classroom furniture together on the environmental and social fabric in the place where it was made. In other words, education needs to trace the *moral memory of place*.

Part of tracing moral memory is tracing the history of ethical transgressions, such as national myths, which are constructed pasts, 'collectively developed and anchored memories that impinge, morally and politically, on the remembering collective' (Olesen, 2015, p. 91). According to Spivak (2012), constructing the past is a work of epistemology, '[w]e know only a passing, and, studying in the present, we construct a past thing: epistemology at work' (p. 1). A memory is created of a non-experiential past, a past known only through narrative, one that often constructs and supports the dominant narrative while silencing others. Memory just like myth is, therefore, a site for both epistemic violence and epistemic remuneration, a paying back through paying attention to past silences. With attention comes the possibility to reconstruct habits that cause or contribute to silencing. Moral memory, then, has the potential to shine a light on practices that would not exist were it not for the silences, practices in need of correction. We can ask, for example, if Indigenous ways of knowing were valued from the beginning of colonisation, how would our schools look today? Put differently, respecting other ways of knowing includes respecting the limitations they place on Western ways of knowing.

There is an obvious need to focus attention on Indigenous pedagogies, methodologies, ways of knowing, co-created classrooms, and school initiatives. However, this is not possible if our attention continues to be marred by outmoded perceptions of Indigenous cultures operating without sophisticated belief and knowledge systems. Recent Indigenous scholarship turns what was historically a monologue about Indigenous bodies and ways of assimilation into a dialogic inquiry in which all educators should engage. According to

Denzin and Lincoln (2008), there are specific conditions that this kind of research as inquiry must have:

> It must be ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonizing, and participatory. It must be committed to dialogue, community, self-determination, and cultural autonomy. It must meet people's perceived needs. It must resist efforts to confine inquiry to a single paradigm or interpretive strategy. It must be unruly, disruptive, critical, and dedicated to the goals of justice and equity.
>
> (p. 3)

To do so is to inquire *with*, and not *about*, Indigenous peoples; to engage together in dialogue that is fallible, epistemically inclusive, and open to the reconstruction of experience.

An aim of lucid inquiry is the development of traitorous identities for both teachers and students. In a lucid inquiry, the teacher as facilitator and co-inquirer maintains awareness of the fallibility of narratives, including their own, and seeks to mitigate the epistemic violence perpetuated by dominant rationality, while broadening both their own and their students' epistemic landscapes. Todd (2016), as an academic engaged in the project of decolonising the academy, talks about citation as a means of perpetuating dominant logic, and the need to 'broaden the spectrum of who you cite and who you reaffirm as "knowledgeable"' (p. 19). Whose ideas we teach and what we count as content in the curriculum and the classroom works in much the same way. Her advice to scholars is, therefore, also relevant to teachers. Todd tells us that Indigenous knowledge must be engaged with in a substantive way by 'citing and quoting Indigenous thinkers directly, unambiguously and generously' and engaging with them as 'dynamic Philosophers and Intellectuals, full stop' (p. 7). Recognition of diverse epistemologies can help build shared understanding and avoid what Fricker (2013) calls hermeneutical injustice.

Hermeneutical injustice is brought about by a lack of shared social meaning causing a person to have difficulty, or fail altogether, in having their experiences understood. A person is vulnerable to such injustice when they are hermeneutically marginalised, that is, when they 'belong to a group which does not have access to equal participation in the generation of social meanings' (p. 1319). Rainville (2001) gives us an example of hermeneutical injustice occurring in the classroom and speaks of the ways in which it can impact learning:

> The absence of overt ridicule may be insufficient to overcome problems associated with low self-esteem or the sense of futility often experienced by those subjected to prolonged institutional oppression. *And even the most politely received speaker becomes frustrated, perhaps to the point of silence, when her ideas are neither recognized nor understood by those around her.* Both Native and non-Native students may be reluctant to speak out

on issues of social justice if it appears that the community is not inter-
ested in hearing what they have to say.

<div align="right">(p. 69, <em>italics</em> added)</div>

Such silences and frustrations should act as signals for the teacher to engage
in lucid inquiry to expand the situated understanding of the class. To be able
to do so, the teacher must first acknowledge the historical socio-political habi-
tat of the classroom, which is both a microcosm of the local community from
which the school draws its students and the local, national, and global history
that has shaped it, including historical silences. Sometimes these silences are
self-imposed through internalised dominance. As hooks (2014) writes:

> The context of silence is varied and multi-dimensional. Most obvious
> are the ways racism, sexism, and class exploitation act to suppress and
> silence. Less obvious are the inner struggles, the efforts made to gain
> the necessary confidence to write, to re-write, to fully develop craft and
> skill—and the extent to which such efforts fail.

<div align="right">(p. 8)</div>

Once a teacher understands the epistemic influences at play in the class-
room, they are better positioned to be able to heed Todd's advice and begin
to shift the classroom's epistemic landscape for the benefit of all. They are
also better positioned to be able to recognise the presence of prejudice in
verbal and non-verbal classroom communication. On becoming aware of a
student's struggle due to 'prejudicial flaws in shared resources for social inter-
pretation' (Fricker, 2007, p. 147), the teacher seeks to address the paucity
of resources through education, that is, through the direct introduction of
missing resources to increase understanding and build confidence in the pres-
ence of shared hermeneutical resources. However, Rainville (2001) warns of
the difficulty of recognising hermeneutical marginalisation, not only from the
perspective of the teacher but also from the perspective of the marginalised.

> Students may be reluctant to speak up when they feel hurt or threat-
> ened by remarks which others do not perceive to be threatening. Finally,
> a lack of public recognition for Aboriginal peoples and their concerns
> may make it difficult for students to formulate challenges toward, and to
> articulate their reasons for wanting to challenge, dominant societal and
> classroom perspectives. In many cases, children may be aware of their
> own, or others', discomfort but lack familiarity with the concepts or the
> vocabulary necessary for responding to this awareness. Unless educa-
> tors are willing to consider these factors when evaluating Philosophy
> for Children curriculum, we will remain oblivious to the possibility that
> classroom dialogue may be biased in ways which are not immediately
> obvious to everyone.

<div align="right">(p. 69)</div>

It can take time and persistence to build a level of hermeneutical under-standing that allows for trust in the community to develop. A teacher engaged in lucid inquiry, who can recognise and facilitate moments of discomfort in the classroom towards greater communal understanding, over time acts as a model for the students to do the same. By doing so, they are modelling a form of inquiry that does not limit the students' abilities to express themselves. All too often the denial of emotion as a traditional part of education via the suppres-sion of 'disruptive' behaviour can block a student's ability to express feelings of hurt, frustration, or anger brought about by epistemic violence, that is, to express their distress over the harm being caused, thereby compounding the harm. Teaching students to supress their emotions, 'to be happy with their lot' or 'just get over it', is part of the living history of colonisation. Students who exhibit distress caused by an unjust system are often punished further for it. Indeed, educational norms in Western societies are inextricably tied to punishment. Pedro A. Noguera (2010) notes that '[d]isciplinary practices in schools often bear a striking similarity to the strategies used to punish adults in society' (p. 342). He adds that '[c]onsistent with the way we approach crime in society, the assumption is that safety and order can be achieved by removing "bad" individuals and keeping them away from others who are presumed to be "good" and law abiding' (p. 343).

Guenther's (2013) notion of social death shares similarities with hermeneu-tical marginalisation. The social death of prisoners, she tells us,

> does not just affect the individual or the family or the local community; it affects all of us who live in a society in which black, brown, and poor people of all races are criminalized and isolated in prisons for the sake of someone else's security and prosperity.
>
> (p. 253)

Plumwood (2012) further warns that '[a]s disciplinary democracy normalises massive incarceration, and more of us become either prisoners or keepers, the fate of non-human and human prisoners increasingly converges' (p. 57). Recall also that a primary justification for capital punishment in the early days of Australian colonisation was its use as a so-called 'teaching tool'. Moreo-ver, numerous books, articles, and studies report on the relationship between bias punishment of marginalised groups in schools and higher rates of incar-ceration, a relationship widely termed the school to prison pipeline (McGrew, 2016). Part of the role of a traitorous teacher, then, is to prevent the normali-sation of epistemic violence *masquerading as discipline*.

The historical narratives (i.e., place, being, belonging, and connectedness) of the classroom intersect with the cultural and moral histories of the students. These histories shape not only the way we think and act within the classroom but the classroom itself. Left unattended, epistemic violence will continue to function as prejudices that can manifest in unfair treatment of individuals and unjust structural practices embedded in law, religion, government policy,

educational theory and practice, along with other social and political institutions. Lucid inquiry gives students the opportunity to reconstruct their experiences by exploring the normative judgements passed on to them throughout their daily lives. In doing so, it allows them the intellectual freedom to collaboratively develop their own narratives in which they are the real-life characters (rather than live through the experiences of the characters of purpose-written philosophical stories-as-text). This provides opportunities for students to develop an epistemic understanding of being in the world and the reciprocal relationship between their belief-habits and the (re)construction of their habitat. To address this further, in the broader domain of education generally, I now turn to the importance of a critical pedagogical approach to place as a site for education, which further challenges the epistemic assumptions embedded in colonial narratives and relationships with land, a much-needed step in undoing ecological irrationality.

## Critical pedagogies of place: recentring Indigenous political concepts through land-based education

Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing have, as Watson (2014) maintains, traditionally been on the peripheral of universalising Western discourses, particularly philosophy. In Australia and many other countries, the knowledge and resources of Indigenous peoples were subsumed and consumed by colonisers without recognition and, in many cases, actively denied, evidence destroyed (e.g., agriculture and land management practices), and dehumanising myths perpetuated (e.g., Aboriginal peoples as uncivilised, nomadic, hunter-gatherers) (p. 516). The legitimacy of Aboriginal knowledge and philosophy has been repeatedly called into question in support of such myths. To quote Watson:

> The 'domestication' and 'assimilation' of Indigenous peoples are on the main agenda of the Australian state and within that process of assimilation the richness of Indigenous law, knowledge and philosophy is largely ignored, or treated as if those Indigenous ways of being are of minor interest.
>
> (p. 509)

Education, as a form of reproduction of the state, has been a site of ongoing assimilation, but a growing body of Indigenous scholarship challenges this (see Rainville, 2001; Shay & Wickes, 2017; Watson, 2014). While Sharp, as one of the founders of Philosophy for Children, seemed aware of some of the limitations of its curriculum and pedagogy, and welcomed criticism, as evidenced in her words, 'we need radical alternatives to be shocked out of habitual ways of seeing, so that we can appreciate an idea or a practice that is more beautiful than anything we might have' (cited in Vansielegham & Kennedy, 2011, p. 42), Indigenous philosophy is still grossly underrepresented

within Philosophy for Children and the wider philosophical community. This is despite there being a substantial and growing body of work being produced by Indigenous scholars in all areas of study including philosophy. Stephen Muecke (2011) notes the presence of Indigenous knowledge 'in departments of anthropology, history, and English, but [. . .] philosophy, for the most part, continues to take little interest' (p. 2). The issue is not a lack of content, but a lack of engagement, partly driven by the continual acceptance of dehumanising myths; a problem which extends beyond philosophy to the education system generally, particularly in colonial countries. As explored in the beginning of the book, one of the overarching aims of education is to assist in the development of personhood. But personhood is a concept waiting to be filled. I have, from a myriad of angles so far, argued that the type of person being developed by Western education is harmful to all that lies outside of dominant systems of thought and governance.

Aboriginal understandings of personhood differ from Western conceptions which emphasise the well-being of the individual as the foundation of a just political system. According to liberal ideology, the individual is an independent and self-reliant entity whose interests should take precedence over community. According to this model, the individual has (i) personal autonomy, the capacity for self-determination or self-governance to lead their own life by making independent choices following their own reasons, preferences, motives, or desires regardless of any specific moral content, (ii) moral autonomy, the capacity to deliberate and subject themselves to moral law, rather than heed authority, and (iii) political autonomy, that personal and moral autonomy, and the decisions derived from them, should not be subject to interference by political communities. In other words, personal and moral autonomy requires a political context in which individuals are free from external forces that would obstruct their choices. A major criticism of the ideal of the autonomous liberal individual is the abstraction away from the relationships of dependency between the individual and others, both human and ecological (see Graham, 1999; Mathews, 1996, 2010; Plumwood, 1993a, 1995). The promotion of this model of individualism and autonomy fails to acknowledge the importance of social relationships and dependency on place.

Aboriginal selfhood, on the other hand, is generated from and has an integral connection to *Land*, which includes the landscape along with all living things. Place is not an abstract concept but is taken as the blueprint for the whole society, or as Graham (2012) puts it, place is 'part of the organising principle of society' (p. 4). She holds that from an Aboriginal perspective people became civilised over vast periods of time, tens of thousands of years in relation to Land, that is, in relation to a physical order beyond the abstract human-made and imposed order. Each person, then, is connected to place as an integral part of their identity: 'Relationship with Land combined with the way society is organised [laterally rather than hierarchically], creates very sound ethical strategy that works towards long-term stability, in social praxis and environmental regard' (p. 5). Consequently, Aboriginal understandings

of personhood can provide ways to recast our understanding of self, as well as 'our responsibilities toward others that respond better to our contemporary global challenges—including climate change' (Brigg & Graham, 2021a, n.p.). Whereas in liberal philosophy the idea that moral principles, obligations, and the legitimacy of political authority have their foundations in the self-governing individual, in Aboriginal political ordering and philosophy, a consistent feature is attentiveness to relations and, thus, 'to the patterns, ethical obligations, and contingencies that arise with those relations' (Brigg & Graham, 2021b n.p.). Understanding the world through multiple epistemic frameworks, without recourse to a hierarchy of knowing, presents the greatest opportunity to reconstruct both our epistemology and ontology in a relational way, a way that, as Colwell (1972) puts it, satisfies not just the individual but 'the needs and requirements of the system Nature itself' (p. 85).

This brings us back to our earlier discussion on Descartes, whose dualistic split between mind and body has been as influential on Western thinking as his Ancient Greek counterpart Plato's theory regarding the nature of knowledge and the self as knower. Like Camus and Peirce, Graham (2014) seeks to shift Descartes' conception of knowledge. She observes that Aboriginal peoples have no equivalent to the Cartesian formulation of I think therefore I am, but 'if there were, it would be— I am located therefore I am' (p. 18). Brian Burkhart (2004) also revises Descartes' adage to describe Indigenous ontology as 'We are, therefore I am', with the 'we' inclusive of the more than human world.

As Graham (2014) explains, for Aboriginal peoples '[p]lace, being, belonging and connectedness all arise out of a locality in Land' (p. 18). Belong to place, then, according to Graham, is what makes us human. Aboriginal people have developed incredibly stable, long-lasting systems of governance based on obligations to care for something outside of human invention. She adds that the 'key understanding of identity/place is coherence', which is 'a general feeling of confidence that one's environment is predictable' (pp. 18–19). Making sure that the knowledge we hold true coheres with the more than human world, that is, that the knowledge we hold hangs together in a way that allows for the reproduction of the natural processes upon which life depends, gives us reasons for having confidence in the future, a confidence that has been severely shaken by climate change. Graham holds that human governance must be predictable 'for coherence to be achieved. That is, coherence has to be worked at or constructed— confidence emerges in one's own social, spiritual and cultural life and this comes out of relationships, rather than positions' (p. 19). Positionality, the foundation of Western thinking, typified by the atomistic individual, as Graham explains, is based on an abstract reduction of the world into small manageable pieces that promote a comfortable, but ultimately false sense of certainty in our position based on a deluded independence from the natural world and inflated sense of our importance in it, leading to ecological blindness. This certainty, rather than Land, becomes foundational and, therefore, structural, creating an unstable, ecologically irrational social order.

I understand Graham's use of coherence as a sense of studied equilibrium, a 'feeling of confidence' arising out of an understanding of our relationships with place, an understanding of past narratives about the human and non-human, embedded in present ontologies with the human embedded alongside them. There are lessons to learn, as Robin Kimmerer (2013) attests, in the non-verbal utterances of the nature world

> the shhh of wind in needles, water trickling over rock, nuthatch tapping, chipmunks digging, beechnut falling, mosquito in my ear, and something more—something that is not me, for which we have no language, the wordless being of others in which we are never alone.
>
> (p. 48)

For Graham (2014), understanding that 'we are not alone in the world' is part of understanding place—an understanding which, by its very existence, is a challenge to sado-dispassionate, abstract, universal logic, and reductive individualist notions of autonomy. She writes:

> In the Aboriginal notions of autonomy, a place isn't a position. A place can't be a position because it's a matrix of relations, narratives, obligations— it has neither rigidity nor flexibility, it has soft, inclusive structure, spirit, agency and *memory*. And while position can also have the same kind of matrix as place, it has not come into the world to preserve relationality (like place)— it comes to contain, define and dominate relationality.
>
> (p. 19, *italics* added)

Eurocentric perspectives of place and personhood, which have colonised education, function according to position to the detriment of a complex understanding of Place. Graham (2009) observes that '[f]or most Westerners, Inquiry precedes Place. Knowledge acquisition both defines and supersedes place' (p. 71). But place can be a teacher and conduit of memory (Brooks, 2008; Wilson, 2005), as it 'both remembers life and its loss and serves itself as a mnemonic device that triggers the ethics of relationality' (Byrd, 2011, p. 118). According to Graham (2012), relationality stands in contrast to positionality and survivalism and gives rise to a custodial ethic. The custodial ethic 'emerges for an ancient reciprocal relationship with nature; an ethic of looking after, stewardship, caring for, and the obligation to look after Land that nurtures' (p. 2).

Reversing the order of inquiry to begin with Land disrupts our habits of keeping school. Recall Colwell's (1972) idea of keeping school, the educational tendency to focus on ever-present social concerns, and the fear of questioning societal values he identified as driving the keeping school mentality. Keeping school means keeping it constantly attuned to the demands of the present, demands he describes as 'the tyranny of familiarity which, under the

banner of relevancy, eliminates a richness in perspective, nuance, and counter-challenge we cannot afford to miss' (p. 88). To reverse the order of inquiry and realign education with its ecological foundations, the division between classroom and place must be collapsed. That is, place must precede inquiry. One of the most common pedagogical approaches promising to reverse this order is place-based education.

Place-based education (also known as pedagogies of place) is an experiential, community-based approach to education, which connects learning and communities to increase student engagement and develop student understanding of the world around them. It does so through a focus on the student's local community as a primary source of learning 'including the school grounds, neighbourhood, and suburb, town, or city, as well as the communities within these places, each with their own history, environment, and culture' (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 166). Place-based education has the potential to assist communities in which schools are situated 'to solve community problems through student involvement, facilitated by teachers who also pay attention to the contextual nature of where the learning experience occurs' (p. 166). Proponents of place-based education have argued for its putative benefits, for example, strengthening connections between students, schools, and local communities (Smith, 2002), providing opportunities for democratic participation (Sobel, 2004), reducing student alienation through connected and grounded learning experiences and, thus, also increasing students' appreciation of their local environment (Theobald, 1997; Theobald & Curtiss, 2000), and fostering ecological literacy (Orr, 1992).

Place-based education acknowledges the educational value of synthesising curriculum and pedagogy through practical activities located in social and ecological settings which provide educational opportunities to develop a sense of place. However, many proponents of critical pedagogy of place, particularly scholars who focus on Indigenous perspectives, have been critical of traditional place-based education for largely ignoring the narratives of Indigenous peoples and conceiving of humans as mainly separate from nature (see Calderon, 2014; McCoy, 2014; Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014; Whitehouse et al., 2014). In their critique of place-based education, Megan Bang et al. (2014) contend that it is important to acknowledge that relational pedagogies of land are not new and that

> Indigenous scholars have focused much attention on relationships between land, epistemology and importantly, ontology (e.g. Cajete, 2000; Delori, 1979; Meyer, 1978). Places produce and teach particular ways of thinking about and being in the world. They tell us the way things are, even when they operate pedagogically beneath a conscious level (Cajete, 2000; Kawagley, 1995).
>
> (p. 44)

Bang et al. (2014) come to a similar conclusion to that of Graham's reconstruction of Descartes' adage and draw attention to the importance of such reconstruction to land-based pedagogies as opposed to place-based.

> [W]e might imagine that the ontology of place-based paradigms is something like 'I am, therefore place is,' in contrast, the ontology of land-based pedagogies might be summarized as 'Land is, therefore we are.' This reframing in our view carries considerable weight in relation to the way we think about, study, and live culture, learning and development with land.
>
> (p. 45)

La Paperson (2014), a nom de plume for K. Wayne Yang, points out that while non-Indigenous 'eco-pedagogical approaches align with anti-racist, feminist and Indigenous education principles', they also 'can miss the core of Indigenous relationships to lands and communities, particularly the complex relationships between urban Indigenous land and life' (p. 117). Moreover, he notes that

> environmental education has been largely silent on land, that is, silent on the settler colonial recasting of land into 'environment,' and silent on broader Indigenous understandings of land as ancestor, as sovereign, as people-places with their own politics and identities.
>
> (pp. 117–118)

Dolores Calderon (2014), who has made place central to her 'examination of social studies curriculum as a vehicle for producing understandings of land and citizenship in educational settings', argues that place-based education needs to incorporate 'a sense of place informed by Indigenous narratives [that] renders the settler colonialism visible' (p. 24). She contextualises place within a framework of land education that 'moves forward the important projects of place-based education, especially its potential for centering indigeneity and confronting educational forms of settler colonialism' (p. 24). In other words, 'land education takes up what place-based education fails to consider: the ways in which place is foundational to settler colonialism' (p. 33). On the topic of land education Eva Tuck, Marcia McKenzie, and Kate McCoy (2014) have this to say:

> Land education puts Indigenous epistemological and ontological accounts of land at the center, including Indigenous understandings of land, Indigenous language in relation to land, and Indigenous critiques of settler colonialism. It attends to constructions and storying of land and repatriation by Indigenous peoples, documenting and advancing Indigenous agency and land rights.
>
> (p. 13)

Land as pedagogy, as Mannion et al. (2013) assert, can draw 'attention to ontological considerations of place', as well as 'to the lived experiences of historically embodied actors in material, social, symbolic and environmental conditions' (p. 793). As such, it can provide educational opportunities to explore people and places through a reciprocal relationship, in which ecologically conscious habits influence and are influenced by habitats. On this view, '[m]aterial, specific, local-yet-connected places' can be understood as 'core to experiences and vice versa' (p. 793). This understanding of place and pedagogy, as ontologically linked dimensions of an educative process which interact with one another, means that teachers must educate *within* place and *for* place, otherwise they fail to interrupt the epistemic and ontological colonial structures ever present in the form of the classroom and curriculum content. As place and possible ways to be conscious of and responsive to it are diverse, there cannot be a classroom-ready model or blueprint for classroom practice. The teacher and students must first experience place, from which pedagogies can then emerge. This gives rise to different ways to teach and to organise curriculum, which depends on the location of the school and other educational factors. My conclusion, then, echoes that of Rainville's (2001):

> It is not difficult to recognize the importance of honoring the presence and the possibilities of Indigenous peoples, and their philosophies, when creating more egalitarian educational programs. I regret that my own eurocentric background prevents me from making authoritative claims about how, exactly, this should be done. I do believe, however, that committed educators can reflect a genuine interest in extending, or altering, the scope of our material so that it includes both traditional and contemporary Native American perspectives. Perhaps not such a formidable task when we consider the many similarities which exist between Indigenous knowledge-seeking practices and Philosophy for Children's dialogical approach.
>
> (p. 72)

How teachers and students understand place will affect how they approach and solve problems, and as the dominant discourse consists mostly of Western conceptions of place (somewhere upon which to participate in activities) and land (as an economic asset, property belonging to someone, either the state or private ownership), expanding this understanding is vital for developing a 'sense of place' necessary for ecological thinking and action. Reconstructing dominant relationships with habitat requires rethinking dominant thinking, which, in turn, requires suspending dominant logic long enough to question it. The arguments presented in this book lay out but one provisional pathway to doing so.

Social interaction in general opens dominant thinking to scrutiny and the possibility of challenge. However, the quality of social interactions, in terms of the capacity to contribute to the deliberative processes essential to democratic

correctiveness, is determined by the existence, or lack thereof, of an educated eco-citizenry able to self-correct. Since education shapes democracy, insofar as schooling plays a primary role in identity formation, instead of preparing students to become competent citizens within existing liberal democracies which have become, as Plumwood argues, divest of correctiveness as evidenced by their inability to change course in light of the overwhelming evidence of climate change, we need schools to invest in the development of students' capacities and dispositions for active and informed eco-citizenship, which starts with each students' ability to discuss and question ideas through a communal process of deliberative self-correction that turns conflict into dialogue, and, thus, to consider differing perspectives, look for gaps in knowledge, develop self-awareness, and eventually be able to respond to problems with relevant action. Land as pedagogy can extend the social reconstruction inherent in pragmatist philosophy to ecological reconstruction and, thus, reconnect education to ecology. Genuine doubt can disrupt dominant logic long enough to begin the process of unlearning necessary for the development of eco-rational identities. Further, lucid inquiry as praxis attempts to reinstate the centrality of genuine doubt in line with Peirce's intent, and in doing so, adds a missing dimension to Lipman's and Sharp's adaptation of the community of inquiry as a method of educational practice, that of emotional education along with an emphasis on the contextual creation of meaning, including the reconstruction and questioning of past meanings that went into the creation of present habits and habitats.

## Conclusion

The arguments I have presented here, and throughout this book, make a case for environmental education to play a greater role in the development of active and informed eco-citizenships, essential for mitigating the dearth of correctiveness that lies at the heart of anthropogenic climate change. The purpose of eco-rational education is to counter the epistemic violence and subsequent social and ecological injustices that stem from the colonial structures and Eurocentric discourses that have dominated educational theory and practice, as well as social and political institutions in colonised countries. These discourses are underpinned by eco-irrational thinking marked by an inability to self-correct and, therefore, to respond to the ecological crises such thinking has helped create.

Eco-irrationality carries through to education where it places emphasis on educating the outsider, rather than educating the insider. Reversing this order and placing emphasis on educating the insider is, therefore, one way of halting the perpetuation of dominant logic and beginning the work of undoing it. To undo eco-irrationality, we must first unlearn dominant logic. To begin this process of unlearning, educators need to break their habitual chains of thought, or in Peirce's (1868) words, 'find reason to doubt what [we] began by believing' (pp. 140–141), hence the importance of genuine doubt.

To educate the insider, the colonial identity, a conversation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is needed, facilitated through reflective engagement with Indigenous socio-political concepts that have been epistemically silenced, with the view to developing new logics, relations, and belief-habits capable of mitigating the effects of the current environmental crisis and creating new political identities that are ecologically informed and adaptable. To achieve this, I have argued, requires an emphasis not only on the epistemic aspects of inquiry but also on experiential learning to synthesise curriculum, pedagogy, and practical learning activities. To these ends, I have proposed a reconstruction of the community of inquiry, which, in addition to re-emphasising pragmatism's appeal to fallibilism and genuine doubt, incorporates Camus' notion of lucidity adapted to education to highlight the centrality of emotions in relation to the absurd. Camus, Plumwood, and Peirce, all move away from the dominance of thought over feeling and external existence (nature) to varying degrees. Indeed, dismissing emotions as irrational can be viewed as a dogmatic form of philosophical suicide. To avoid philosophical suicide and, thus, note the limits of reason, the concept of lucidity provides an understanding of the human world as constructed in relationship with the more than human world, which implies the relationship is open to ongoing reconstruction. Lucidity drives not only epistemic freedom but freedom to create and recreate our habits to better adapt to our habitat, and in doing so, provides a theoretical account of the link between inquiry and action. By re-emphasising Peirce's concept of fallibilism and genuine doubt, along with Camus' conception of lucidity, and Plumwood's ethico-epistemic proposition, the focus of education is shifted onto the development of lucid inquirers as essential to eco-rational identity formation and citizenship.

Lucidity, as attentiveness to the gap between the desire for meaning and inherent value, and the seeming lack of both, provides an experiential account of living in a fallibilistic world and, thus, is an exemplar of the kind of doubt teachers need to sustain and encourage in a community of inquiry. Doubt carries the potential to disrupt the learnt patterns of ecological irrationality long enough to begin to unlearn them and is, therefore, essential for the development of traitorous identities. There is a need for teachers to become and to model traitorous identities, to present stories, information, beliefs, and habits that lie outside of the dominant narrative. In doing so, teachers can provide opportunities to disrupt the epistemic violence inherent in most classrooms in colonised countries, to introduce Indigenous concepts which colonial certainty has silenced.

Peirce's objection to Descartes notwithstanding (that one can never be aware of all their prejudices), teachers have a responsibility to their students to be, at the very least, mindful that they will be prejudiced in ways unique to them, some of which are epistemically harmful and others that are epistemically helpful, and attempt to recognise the difference, to become lucid. Otherwise, prejudice has a way of seeping into discourse, content choices, and methodology in general; of seeping into the habitat and limiting intellectual freedom. In short, the teacher needs to be aware of the limiting effects epistemic violence

has on the creation of an educational habitat in which diversity can thrive and work, to introduce, as Graham calls for, a variety of knowledge systems.

I have also argued for the need to reinstate Dewey's conception of experiential education, in order to make the curriculum flexible as Dewey intended, 'where the focus is not on the logical structure of the curriculum but on the coordination of experiencing and learning by facilitating meaningful connections, thereby achieving curriculum synthesis' (Burgh & Thornton, 2022, p. 85). Bleazby's conception of education as social reconstruction learning provides a way of bringing together both Lipman's and Dewey's theories to integrate philosophy with the practical, active dimensions of inquiry. Further, a critical land-responsive approach to education can increase the ability of social reconstruction learning to foster the development of ecologically minded identities by collapsing the human/nature dualism. Such approaches provide an effective way for students to enter into conversation with Indigenous conceptions of place, socio-political concepts, knowledge, and understandings of socio-political ordering. As Manulani Aluli Meyer (2008) writes: 'One does not simply learn about land, we learn best from land' (p. 219).

To reiterate, pedagogies of Land are not new, and Indigenous scholars have focused much attention on relationships between Land, epistemology, and ontology. However, there is a strong tendency with national curricula, teacher preparation courses, and classroom practices to endorse the very colonial narratives and domineering relationships with the Land that Indigenous researchers argue require decolonisation. The inclusion of Indigenous philosophical perspectives and worldviews then, is more than a matter of racial equality or 'thinking about race' regarding the selection of material or application of the community of inquiry pedagogy. It is, as I have argued, also about epistemic violence against Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, and ecological reproduction that permeates dominant logic and philosophy itself. Clearly, much more needs to be done, such as genuine engagement with Indigenous communities, co-creation with Indigenous educators, empirical research drawing on Indigenous research methodologies (see Martin, 2008; Smith, 2012), attention to epistemic injustices in the current professional development and in-service programmes for teachers, and support for more Indigenous input into curriculum development and resource materials. Educational reconstruction is vital if we are to move towards eco-rational education to restore the disconnection between humans and Land, which is central to the kind of ecological thinking required for reconstructing the ecologically irrational belief-habits that have informed our everyday actions, dominated political decisions, and helped jeopardise our collective future.

## Note

1  If we take Plumwood's lead here, we can conceive of suffering as reduction of a being's or system's reproductive or regenerative capabilities. In this way, languages can suffer, cultures can suffer, ideas can suffer, as can humans, plants, animals, and ecosystems.

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