

The Crisis of Practice

Deleuze and the Idea of Learning Development in UK Higher Education

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I, Jason Paul Eyre confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

Learning Development is an emerging field of practice in UK higher education aimed primarily at supporting student learning in response to massification and widening participation within the sector. As a nascent profession in its own right, attempts have been made to define Learning Development in order to confer recognition as a distinctive branch of educational practice. This thesis aims to contribute to an understanding of Learning Development and the higher educational milieu in which it operates in a way that resists formal definitions that may limit and circumscribe the activities of its practitioners. Instead of documenting the activities associated with Learning Development and identifying common generic features (a generalised definition), the present thesis uses a narrative device to focus on practices in the particular case. It argues that reflexive awareness of Learning Development practices arises in response to various crises of normativity (crises of expectation, legitimacy, and conduct) whenever habituated routines are disrupted. An ‘ontology of becoming’ as developed by Gilles Deleuze provides an alternative lens through which to conceptualise Learning Development. An elusive and transcendent ideal of Learning Development can be avoided in favour of a ‘method of dramatisation’, which focuses on particular cases of practice in order to identify the relational capacities structuring the way Learning Development actually manifests. Learning Development can thus be conceptualised as consisting of the practitioner’s relation to learners, the institution, and the disciplines. In this view, the normative crises identified previously can be seen as an expression of what Learning Development practices tend towards rather than as failures of practice. Hence, a more positive Idea (Deleuze) of Learning Development emerges, one that permits a creative reconceptualisation of its possibilities. Viewing Learning Development in terms of its relational tendencies permits a creative exploration of how those relations might play out in practice.

Impact Statement

The present thesis will make an original contribution to four distinct areas of research, scholarship and practice: the theorisation of Learning Development as a field of practice; the philosophy of higher education; the broader philosophy of education; and in philosophy more generally, through its interpretation and application of the work of Gilles Deleuze. The clearest impact of the thesis is in terms of the development and practice of the field of Learning Development which forms the focus of the research. As described in the thesis, Learning Development is a nascent field of practice in UK higher education (HE) that has emerged in response to widening participation and the marketisation of the HE sector. Learning Development is undergoing a process of ‘professionalisation’, and the present thesis makes a significant contribution to the theorisation of the field at this crucial juncture, enabling a deeper understanding of the way Learning Development intersects with the various elements that comprise the academy with the potential to shape the development of the field. In this respect, the second area of impact lies in the way the broader implications of Learning Development can be understood in the context of the HE sector as a whole. The thesis and its ideas have the potential to provide insights into fruitful areas for empirical investigation, and, more theoretically, to contribute to the construction of a ‘philosophy’ of higher education (Barnett, 2016). Likewise, the third area of impact derives from the way the ideas developed in the thesis might in turn be applied to education more broadly; that is, in schools and other forms of institutionalised education. Finally, in its in-depth engagement with the work of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, the present thesis demonstrates how the work of this highly influential theorist can be applied to an educational context in a way that has not been done before, and how Deleuze’s often abstract ideas can be utilised and applied in a more concrete manner. In particular, the empirical and methodological potential of Deleuze’s work is highlighted, and this may enable new and innovative ways of thinking in our understanding of education.

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Introduction

1. Background to the Thesis

This thesis began its life as a vague feeling of unease. Following a decade or so working as a librarian, I took up the post of ‘Learning Developer’ in a British university, a position I still hold at the time of writing. In common with most Learning Developers, my work primarily involves engaging directly with university students on developing their academic skills and competencies – writing, research practices, critical thinking, and so on – alongside an engagement with academic colleagues in the disciplines, and with the institutions themselves (through professional services staff and senior managers) in order that my engagement with students takes place in the appropriate context in terms of curriculum, assessment, academic quality, and the like.

It quickly became apparent that, although I had never heard of it before, ‘Learning Development’ was a distinctive and growing field of practice, in the process of establishing itself as an integral part of UK higher education. My own practices have been informed by an engagement with other Learning Developers through online mailing lists, conferences and academic publications, as well as through less formal conversations with colleagues within my own university and practitioners at other institutions. The status of Learning Development as a nascent profession fascinates me, and I have an interest in the conditions of its emergence, the way that it has developed, and where how it might evolve into the future. However, Learning Development in and of itself is not the subject of this thesis.

The topic of this thesis emerged from a growing sense that all was not quite so straightforward with Learning Development as I might have first imagined. This sense of unease arose directly from my practices, and the reflections and conversations I then had on what I was doing each and every day. First and foremost among the questions that began to coalesce in my mind was: Why are we needed here? In other words, why is the university paying the salaries of a dedicated team of people teaching the students how to write and think ‘academically’, when there are very capable academics in the

various departments we work alongside who could do this work? Another creeping thought was this: Are the approaches we take always appropriate for the students we work with? Although we take care to liaise closely with academic colleagues to tailor our input, there is a degree of repetition of ideas, approaches, frameworks and so on, that we continually make use of, and it is unclear whether these are always the right approaches to be taking with students across such a wide range of disciplines: Do our somewhat generic approaches to ‘academic literacies’ (so-called) stifle creative, individual student responses to scholarly questions? Another thought-cum-doubt involved the alignment of what we are doing with the assessment regime – in other words, are we simply functionaries whose job it is to ‘get students over the line’? Are we, as Learning Developers, simply ‘tools’ of the institution itself, a way of wresting some control over teaching and learning away from the discipline or professionally-oriented departments? None of these thoughts were perhaps as clearly articulated as they are here – they grew and collected, manifesting as an inchoate, critical stance toward my work. The working subtitle of my thesis thus became: “Learning Development: what the hell do we think we’re doing?”. The most sensible and practical way to address these emerging questions, it seemed to me, was to talk with my Learning Developer colleagues, and to read about Learning Development in the emerging literature on the subject. And so I did just that – I summarise some of the key ideas and themes in the next section.

The apparently simple questions of ‘what is Learning Development?’ and the related ‘what do Learning Developers do?’ could have formed the basis for an interesting and informative empirical study (and, indeed, has done elsewhere – see Hilsdon 2018 for the thesis that this could have been). My interest in Learning Development, however, is not empirical, not concerned with what it currently is. Nor is it concerned with its genesis, on an historical or genealogical analysis of its origins. My interest in Learning Development is philosophical and can best be summarised through the following, crucial, question: ‘If Learning Development can be conceived as a set of practices, then what gives rise to those practices in each instance?’ In other words, if Learning Development has a particular form in a particular place and time, then what are the *underlying conditions* that give it that particular expression?

The form of this question has been shaped by my engagement with the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1994), and in the thesis’ earlier incarnations did not

have the same degree of coherence. The question was formulated, initially, through my engagement with the literature on the topic, in talking to other practitioners, in my own institution and elsewhere, and by thinking about my own practices and how they changed and evolved. What I noticed was that even in my own institution, in my own team, the things that we do as Learning Developers are *different* – sometimes subtly, sometimes markedly. Why is this so? Even in my own teaching, I found that the way I would approach a lecture on essay writing for first year architecture students would be different to the way I would approach a lecture on essay writing for first year Fine Art students. Why is this so? Why not have a ‘standard’ lecture?

Another feature of my own practices that contributed to the formulation of the present thesis was the experience of ‘thinking about Learning Development’ as a distinct set of practices. I began to notice that I only really did this when I was experiencing some kind of problem. That is to say, my awareness of ‘Learning Development’ itself took the form of the ‘problematic’, insofar as it was evoked as a distinct set of practices in response to some problem or other. The very concept of the ‘problem’ is itself problematic in relation to education, perhaps notably due to an assumption that problems always require resolution, occluding the more exploratory aspects of education.¹ This insight will be explored in depth in the following thesis, and the trajectory of that thinking in turn informs the initial question – that of the ‘conditions that give rise’ to particular practices.

In order to begin this engagement, the reader will need three things by way of introduction. First, a ‘sketch’ of what Learning Development is, so that the reader may approach the analysis in the main body of the thesis with a sufficient understanding of the subject matter to grasp what is going on; secondly, the reader will be introduced to the narrative device that the thesis makes use of in order to keep the philosophical analysis focused on Learning Development and not slip away into abstraction; thirdly, the reader will be introduced to the philosophical approach that has been adopted – that is to say, Deleuze and his philosophy – and the way Deleuze’s work has been applied to the philosophy of education in recent scholarship. Finally, an outline of the thesis

1 See Saito and Standish (2009) on the limits of education as a form of ‘problem-solving’. As we shall see (in chapters 10 and 12), Deleuze re-casts the concept of the problem, equating it with the *Idea*.

structure will be presented in order to signpost the chapters that follow, and to sketch out the argument in outline.

2. ‘Learning Development’: A sketch

As outlined above, the present thesis presents a particular kind of analysis of a field of practice in UK higher education known as ‘Learning Development’. It is crucial, therefore, that the reader has some grasp of what is being discussed. Rather than attempt something like a ‘definition’ of Learning Development, or an extensive review of the literature on the subject (something that has recently been undertaken by John Hilsdon, (2018), the following section instead presents a ‘sketch’, that is to say, an outline of what constitutes Learning Development – or at least some of its most important features for the present analysis. The purpose is to provide a degree of prior understanding for the reader without over-determining what Learning Development is, and potentially rendering it fixed and sterile. As will be seen, this effort not to fix things too rigidly is a preoccupation of the present thesis. The rationale for this approach to the subject will become more apparent as the thesis progresses, but suffice as to say at this point that the depiction of Learning Development which follows is not intended to be comprehensive and exhaustive, but rather *indicative*.

The following characterisations are offered as instructive and in some way representative of what has been written on the subject of Learning Development in recent years:

‘Learning Development is a complex set of multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary academic roles and functions involving teaching, tutoring, research, and the design and production of learning materials, as well as involvement in staff development, policy-making and other consultative activities’ (Hilsdon, 2011)

‘...we argue for Learning Development to be allowed to be understood as a set of socio-political or emancipatory practices designed to empower students, from a range of diverse contexts, for “action” (Friere 1977)’ (Sinfield *et al.*, 2011)

‘Learning Developers share a common desire to empower students in their learning through helping them make sense of academic practices within higher education and supporting them to acquire the generic underpinning skills for the environments in which they are working. Informed by these values of empowerment and partnership, a Learning Development perspective encourages and supports all students to be actively engaged in their own learning and to analyse and assess their own development within experiential and social contexts’ (Rooney and Buckley, 2015).

Learning Development is a field of practice concerned with how students learn and how they make sense of academic conventions. (Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education, 2018).

It would perhaps be problematic to attempt an all-encompassing *definition* of Learning Development on the basis of four selective quotations from the published literature, but certain features of Learning Development can be discerned from them. The purpose at this early stage in the thesis is not to provide a detailed review of the literature on Learning Development (for which see Hilsdon, 2018, pp. 16-28), but rather to provide a brief sketch of Learning Development and some of its features that I wish to highlight, so that the reader can get their bearings for the detailed analysis that will follow.

The first feature that the selections above highlight is that Learning Development involves the teaching of university students, and that this teaching involves the student’s own *approaches to learning*, rather than what it is that they learn. Significantly, the student is characterised as being responsible for their own learning (which Learning Developers ’support’ and seek to ’actively engage’ students in). This function is based on an understanding of students as ’autonomous’ learners. Supporting students in their ’approaches to learning’ in this context is understood as involving a set of generic and underpinning skills relating to ’academic practices’ rather than in terms of the learning of discipline-specific content knowledge.

Indeed, the second feature distinguishes between the domain of Learning Development and the domain of the various subject disciplines: Learning Development is seen as being ’cross disciplinary’, rather than grounded in any one of the disciplines. In other words, Learning Development presents (or seeks to establish) a dichotomy between the

learning of subject knowledge through the academic and professional disciplines, and ‘approaches to learning’ in terms of academic practices, the latter aspect of learning is (or can be) characterised in terms of ‘generic skills’. In being seen as the proper domain of Learning Development, this characterisation implies that the domain of learning relating to academic practices is somehow not evoked or fully catered for by the disciplines themselves and needs to be augmented or supplemented by the work of Learning Developers.

The third feature of Learning Development that we can derive from the way that it is characterised in selected literature relates to the way its activities are understood to be ‘empowering’, and of having a distinctly political function². This political understanding (evoking emancipation and Freire) relates primarily to the ‘diverse contexts’ of students – here referring to the diverse backgrounds of students in a non-traditional or massified higher education environment. While not evoked explicitly in these selections, this reflects a further dichotomy of ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ higher education, with Learning Development cast as the staunch defender of the ‘non-traditional’ and of widening participation. As we shall see, this reflects the genesis of Learning Development as a response to the massification of higher education in the United Kingdom. Emancipation and empowerment here can also be seen in the context of fostering ‘autonomy’ on the part of the student, as discussed above.

The final feature worth noting relates to the fact that the work of Learning Developers is seen in a much broader context than simply working directly with students. Rather, Learning Development is also intimately concerned with policy, strategy and collaborative working with other actors in higher education in order to achieve its aims – that is to say, the empowerment and ‘emancipation’ of students through enhancing their approaches to learning. This collaboration ranges from working with the administrative and managerial functions of the institutions in which they are based, to work with academic colleagues representing the subject disciplines. Significantly, Learning Developers view this aspect of their work as fundamentally important (as well

2 At least in one of the depictions quoted. Significantly though, this is drawn from the fourth chapter of a key text in Learning Development, the final chapter in a section entitled ‘Defining Learning Development’, so it cannot be seen as an anomaly or an outlier in self-conceptions of what Learning Development consists of. The work of Hilsdon (2018) bears this out.

as ‘complex’) in that without this element, its work with students alone would fail to achieve the empowerment it seeks to facilitate.

In Learning Development, then, we see a field of practice that seeks to empower students in a massified higher education environment by working with them directly to impart ‘skills’ relating to academic practices that are distinct from the content knowledge of the academic and professional disciplines. Simultaneously, Learning Developers also work directly with representatives of institutional administration and management, and with academic colleagues in the disciplines in to achieve its aims at a policy and strategic level. It views its activities as being of benefit to students in enabling to take control of their own learning.

One potentially fruitful way of understanding Learning Development more clearly is to compare and contrast it with a related – and more mature – field of practice in UK Higher Education: Educational Development. Also known as ‘Academic Development’, Educational Development shares some common features with Learning Development, but also exhibits some important differences. For Educational Development, we see the following attempts at encapsulating their domain of activity from writers on the subject:

‘There is broad agreement that the role of EDUs [Educational Development Units] has two major strands: (1) the professional development of staff relating to learning and teaching and other academic duties, and (2) a shared strategic responsibility for implementation of the learning, teaching and assessment strategy, encouragement of innovation, and enhancing teaching quality.’ (Gosling, 2008, p. 1).

‘In the 2000 survey it was clear that two functions, improving teaching and learning methods across the institution and providing staff development relating to teaching and learning, were endorsed by all the respondents as being central to their role’.
(Gosling 2008, p. 14)

‘The big issues for educational developers in 1993 had been around for some time, and some still are today. How can we teach better? How can students learn better? How do we innovate and modernise? How do we offer a decent higher education to

all our citizens, at all stages of their lives? And could teaching in HE remain an activity which required neither training nor qualification?’ (Wisdom, Lea and Parker, 2013).

‘UK higher education is becoming increasingly ‘student centred’, not in the critical sense whereby the notion of teacher as depositor and student as depository is disrupted (Friere, 1996, p. 53), but through an ever strengthening political will to ensure that universities provide value for money. Therefore, there is every expectation that there will continue to be a strong investment in the teaching and learning aspects of UK institutions’ (Canning, 2007, pp. 397-398).

‘As a discipline, pedagogy is well placed to ensure a continued criticality towards practices in UK higher education to protect the intellectual fabric of higher education from the challenges of audit culture’ (Canning, 2007, p. 401)

A number of things can be said about Educational Development on the basis of these selections, and differences in the perspectives and assumptions of Educational Development and Learning Development should become apparent even as their similarities are made plain. Firstly, like Learning Development, Educational Development concerns itself with teaching and learning in a higher education context. This commonality is a key point of convergence between Learning Development and Educational Development. Furthermore, the historical development of Educational Development as in the way that it came to occupy a place in UK higher education is mirrored by the way Learning Development later came into being as a distinct entity; that is to say that both Learning Development and Educational Development can be seen as a product of the massification of higher education, a response to the perceived need to enhance teaching and learning practices in ways that will meet the needs and demands of ever-larger cohorts of students from ever-widening backgrounds.

Secondly, unlike Learning Development, Educational Development is not concerned with working directly with students but confines itself to working at one step removed from the student body, that is to say, in working with staff to ‘improve’ their teaching practices. That this is framed in terms of ‘professional development’ is significant as it invokes the idea that teaching at university is (or should be) in some way

‘professionalised’, implying that it is not sufficient for academic staff to be an exponent of their own discipline (or professional) speciality, but that their teaching activities must also be considered their profession as well. Like Learning Development, this in turn implies a ‘calving off’ of the teaching and learning element of academic work from the discipline/content knowledge element, a dichotomy that both Learning Development and Educational Development share in.

Finally, and perhaps unsurprisingly, both Learning Development and Educational Development share a common grounding in what has been termed ‘the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)’. This is what is being referred to when Canning characterises ‘pedagogy’ as a discipline.³ An expectation of continued ‘strong investment’ in teaching and learning by institutions in 2007 has been borne out since, with an increased marketisation and a ‘student centred’ environment developing very much along the lines that Canning predicted, although it is arguable whether or not ‘pedagogy’ as a discipline has been able to hold in check the ‘audit culture’ of which he speaks. As a further point of distinction, and notwithstanding Canning’s awareness of the perils of audit culture, Educational Development can perhaps be thought of as being less ‘emancipatory’ in its aims than Learning Development, with practitioners of Educational Development having a greater apprehension of the strategic and policy implications of their activities than practitioners of Learning Development. ‘Innovation’, ‘modernisation’ and ‘change’ are all seen as drivers of Educational Development, in contradistinction with the ideals of ‘emancipation’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘partnership’ which can be found more often in the literature of Learning Development. This is perhaps due to Educational Development’s staff development and institutional/faculty (rather than student) focus, and also perhaps because Educational Development has been established for longer than Learning Development. SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association), the professional body for Educational Developers was founded in 1993; ALDinHE (Association of Learning Developers in Higher Education), the professional body for Learning Developers, was established in 2007, 14 years later. These factors may have led to a fuller integration of Educational Development functions into the institutional management of universities. The acronym

3 The term ‘pedagogy’ has come to be known in the sense of ‘approaches to teaching and learning’ in both adults and children (the term ‘androgogy’ to refer to the teaching of adults has never been widely taken up). In Continental traditions the various linguistic cognates of ‘pedagogy’ indicate a much richer concept than the narrow way it has come to be understood in Britain (see Simon, 1994).

ALDinHE (pronounced ‘Aldeen’) was chosen deliberately as a reference to the Aldine Press in 15th Century Florence, which through its mass printing of vernacular bibles is viewed as an important development in the democratisation of knowledge.⁴ In this way, the professional association of Learning Developers has deliberately situated itself as having an ‘emancipatory’ agenda from the very outset.

There are, then, some shared fundamentals between Learning Development and Educational Development. Chiefly, they relate to the common domain of their activities in the form of the university; the shared historical development within that domain in response to the expansion of the sector, massification and widening participation; and finally, to a shared intersection with the scholarship of teaching and learning (the discipline of ‘pedagogy’). Differences in focus (e.g. student vs. staff), approach (co-production vs. staff development), ethos (‘emancipation’ vs. ‘modernisation’), and professional identity (ALDinHE vs. SEDA) are present and clear when one undertakes a reading of the associated literature; nevertheless, the commonalities between Learning Development and Educational Development perhaps insist on some form of co-consideration.

The case for the co-consideration of Learning Development and Educational Development has been made by a number of authors in both fields of practice (notably Rust, 2009; Samuels, 2013); (Gibbs, 2009); Hilsdon 2011). In each case the authors, while noting important similarities between Learning Development and Educational Development, are likewise mindful of a need to understand the distinctiveness of each. Rust advocates a ‘coming together’ of the two fields, suggesting a number of common areas of concern, but he acknowledges that this would be disruptive to both, albeit in a potentially positive way:

Now I acknowledge that probably nothing comes without also having a potential downside. To bring our two communities together may take some of us out of our comfort zone, may require some of our allegiances to loosen and be rebuilt, and may well require us to learn new skills. But these can all also be seen as opportunities, especially the potential benefit of learning from each other (Rust 2009, p. 5)

4 As related by John Hilsdon in his Keynote address to the 2018 ALDinHE conference at the University of Leicester.

Rust's call for co-consideration is echoed by Gibbs, who characterises the relationship between Learning Development and Educational Development as being unequal in terms of the way each has developed and integrated into HE institutions:

For me the big question is whether it would be best for Learning Development to 'piggy-back' on the existing much larger and more well-embedded 'educational development' enterprise, and piggy-back on its decades of development and institutional integration, or try to carve itself out a separate niche. The former risks losing its distinct identities, preoccupations, and contributions. The latter risks the howling gales of political whim and expediency (Gibbs 2009, p. 9).

Here we see Learning Development and Educational Development cast as distinctive but inter-related fields of practice. Their commonalities and differences outlined serve to provide a clearer demarcation of what is understood as 'Learning Development'. In spite of the commonalities and the potential for co-consideration, in the present thesis the emphasis and discussion will be squarely on Learning Development in order to maintain the necessary degree of focus.

3. Approach to the thesis: Narrative

In order to examine Learning Development as it is practiced, rather than as an abstract category of activity, the present thesis employs a narrative device in the form of a fictionalised account of a particular (and entirely invented) practitioner, 'Lucy'. These fictionalised accounts are intended to provide an accessible basis for the employment of a philosophical analysis; in other words, the fictionalised accounts provide concrete examples to enable the reader to better understand the meaning and implications of the more abstract elements of the philosophy. Lucy is not a real person, she is a fictional character, and the methodological implications of the use of such a device in the present investigation requires some explanation.

The 'Lucy narratives' are employed throughout the thesis, beginning with chapter 1, which is entirely written from Lucy's perspective, in the first person. Chapter 1, 'A day

in the Life’, sets out for the reader a ‘typical’ day for Lucy in her work as a Learning Developer. This has two intended functions. The first is to set out a range of practices that Learning Developers might be seen to engage in, providing the reader with a ‘flavour’ of the work being investigated in a concrete (albeit fictionalised) form. This is intended to complement the brief review of the literature of Learning Development comprises set out in the present introduction, with the introduction sketching out ‘what Learning Development is’, and the first chapter providing an account of ‘what Learning Developers do’. The second function of the first chapter is to introduce a range of plausible scenarios which will then be drawn on throughout the thesis (often at the start of a chapter, but sometimes also within them) in order to illustrate or explore various aspects of Learning Development through the particular instance of Lucy’s work. Such an approach will allow for a deeper exploration of various aspects of Learning Development practices through concrete examples than would be possible through more abstract discussions alone. However, the employment of such a device is not without certain issues and potential problems. The remainder of this section aims to consider some of these issues in more depth.

The first thing to say about the employment of fictional narrative is that it distinguishes the present work from any form of empirical observation; indeed, it can be seen as a deliberate strategy to avoid the perception of empirical inquiry. In seeking to examine the ontological underpinnings of Learning Development, it was seen as crucial to avoid a method of enquiry that was based on observations of the actual world – that is, an empirical investigation. One such approach would have been to bring together various perspectives on Learning Development and try to extrapolate general principles from them.⁵ Various first-hand accounts, in the form of survey responses, interview transcripts, focus group discussions and the like could indeed be very valuable in obtaining an insight into the practices under investigation, but the present thesis seeks not to present an account of the *actual* practices of Learning Development in order to draw general conclusions from their analysis, but instead to provide a philosophical account of *the conditions which give rise* to those actual practices. Focusing on the first-hand accounts of practitioners could potentially prove distracting – every actual account brings with it a claim of ‘truth’, and a certain insistence on its verity. The focus of the present thesis is not on the ‘actual’, but on the conditions that permit the ‘actual’ to

5 This approach can be seen as a form of ‘aggregation’, and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 of the present thesis.

manifest. By ‘conditions’, I am not here directly referring to the political, historical or economic conditions that give rise to certain practices, but rather to the system of relations, particularly at the personal, interpersonal and institutional levels from which practices emerge. Of course, as the perspective on ‘relations’ broadens out, so too politics, history and economics come more obviously into play; however, the focus will remain at the ‘micro’ rather than the ‘macro’ scale.⁶

This is not to say that the Lucy narrative is entirely fanciful. It is based on my own experiences of practice, including the shared experiences of colleagues gathered over many years of working in the field. One option following from this would have been to engage in a kind of auto-ethnographic research methodology positioning myself as an ‘insider’ (Mercer, 2007). While potentially rich, this approach would have a similar problem to other empirical approaches, as outlined above; namely, the potential to amplify the significance of small-scale empirical findings and to generalise these into principles that apply at a much broader scale.

Another potential objection to the employment of a fictionalised narrative account is that it may potentially create a ‘caricature’ of Learning Development, with some exaggerated or distorted features. This is a serious objection, and one that will not be neatly side-stepped. Instead, I accept this criticism in advance, and ask that the reader accept the limitation. In writing about education, R.S. Peters makes the point that the various attempts to characterise and define education as a concept are always inadequate in and of themselves:

All such views are inadequate in the way in which caricatures are; they distort the features of a concept in a particular direction. But they are valuable, like caricatures, in emphasizing salient features (Peters 1966, p. 46).

In the same way, the employment of the Lucy narrative may indeed represent a distortion of the events on which they are based – that is to say, ‘what really happened’. In the fictionalised account conversations are compressed; events are elided; edits have been made. The ‘real world’ has been rendered more concise, more accessible to the reader. In this way, the account as presented distils the elements required for discussion and analysis without the need to ‘bend the truth’ in order to be concise; or to ‘be

⁶ The concept of the *event* which Deleuze develops from Whitehead accommodates a certain ‘compression of scale’, as will become apparent in the discussions in Part Three of the thesis.

selective of the evidence' in order to explore a particular permutation of practice. This potentially useful 'distortion' cannot therefore be readily accomplished by empirical means without risking the perception that the observations are being distorted to fit the analysis. In line with Peters' defence of caricature, the purpose of the present thesis is not to provide a naturalistic account of Learning Development, but to provide an account that emphasises its salient features.

Kara, (2013) emphasises an additional feature that fictionalised accounts can readily explore – the emotional dimension of practitioner experience. This is particularly important in the present thesis, as Lucy's emotional, embodied responses are central to the analysis. Such a degree of exploration would have been difficult to achieve through an empirical study, and would have been equally difficult to express in purely abstract terms without a fictional 'person' to experience them.

In semiotic terms, specifically those set out by Umberto Eco, (1990), it can be said that the 'Lucy narratives' represent a 'possible world' that has been 'furnished' by my own experiences to be as close to the 'actual' world as can be (Eco 1990, pp. 66-67). In that sense it, it is intended to be experienced as realistic, or 'verisimilar' (p. 75); however, as Eco points out, even this level of verisimilitude should not attempt to conceal the fact that such a fictional world has been constructed in some way. Eco uses the term 'Small world' to designate such a construction: "a relatively short course of local events in some nook or corner of the actual world" (Hintikka 1988, cited in Eco 1990, p. 67). What is required on the reader's part, according to Eco, is a kind of 'cooperative goodwill', wherein the reader accepts the limitations of the fictional world being created, but proceeds in good faith:

If the Model Reader behaves, so he/she will enjoy the story. Otherwise he/she will be condemned to an everlasting encyclopedic research (Eco 1990, p. 82)⁷

Finally, as to Lucy herself. I am hopeful, as are all authors, that this character will come to life for the reader, though not everything she says or does will ring true. I apologise to Lucy herself for any shortcomings to her reality. But, although she may not realise it,

⁷ Perhaps Deleuze and Guatarri had Eco's words in mind when they discussed the three stages of the concept in *What is Philosophy?* (1994), the 'encyclopedic' being the first stage (see discussion in the third part of the conclusion of the present thesis).

her creation was only ever limited to the confines of this thesis. As Frida Beckman writes in the introduction to her biography of Gilles Deleuze:

There is a way, Deleuze argues, of using a name not to denote an ego or a person or subject, but as a denotation of the intensities and multiplicities that run through an individual (Beckman, 2017, Loc.185).

In Lucy, we have a narrative device through which (or through whom) we may observe the ‘intensities and multiplicities that run through’ her as she goes about her work as a Learning Developer. The meaning of these terms will become apparent as the thesis progresses; suffice it to say, Lucy provides a convenient lens through which the reader might obtain some understanding of the complexities of the subject under analysis.

4. Approach to the thesis: Philosophical

The present thesis is philosophical in nature, and draws primarily on the work of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995). My engagement in the present study with the work of Gilles Deleuze is both fundamental and potentially fraught. Fundamental, for it is Deleuze that provides me with the various strategies and procedures that permit my own philosophical position to take shape. Potentially fraught, because I do not at any point take Deleuze and his work as the object of my study, and therefore risk the perception of a cursory or incomplete engagement. Deleuze wrote over a long period of time and ploughed and re-ploughed the same furrows in a number of different ways. My engagement with his work therefore spans a similarly long timescale, and dips in and out of his writings without perhaps lingering long enough to provide instructive exegeses on the works themselves. I cannot emphasise enough that this thesis is not a work on Deleuze or his philosophy, although I would consider this work to be, in its own way, ‘Deleuzean’. It is quite possible, even likely, that experts on Deleuze may find fault with the way I characterise some of his thinking. Saying this is not intended to be a defensive move, but an affirmative one: I acknowledge this weakness, and from it declare a distinctive strength. I stand with Manuel DeLanda who makes a similar statement at the start of *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (DeLanda, 2002, pp. xvi-xvii), declaring that work to be a ‘reconstruction’ of Deleuze rather than a faithful engagement with his work. Like DeLanda, I seek in the present work to engage with Deleuze’s ontological universe, to make use of it, and to adapt it to

the present conditions. Deleuze provides the tools, not the stone to carve; the conditions for a language, not its specific utterance. As Barnett (2017, pp. 79-80) remarks, there are two broad stances one can take in constructing a philosophy of higher education. The first is to commence with the work of a philosopher and then see how it applies to the ‘problems’ of higher education. This has certain limitations, particularly insofar as the focus of many philosophers is not on higher education itself, and this is certainly the case with Deleuze. The second approach that Barnett identifies is to commence with the ‘problems’ of higher education themselves and then see what resources a philosopher can offer in understanding them – the ‘uses of philosophy’ (p.80). This latter stance is the one adopted in the present thesis.

Insofar as this thesis takes as its study the nascent profession of Learning Development, the engagement with Deleuze here represents an expression of some of his philosophical concepts in a practical, concrete setting rather than as philosophical abstractions. It is my intention, therefore, to show the reader some ways in which Deleuze’s philosophy can be brought to bear on a particular setting, in this case an educational one. By giving it this expression, I hope to bring some of Deleuze’s more complex and abstract ideas to life, so that the reader might see the power and utility of his thought. In this way, a secondary aim of the present thesis is to further our understanding of the possibilities of certain of Deleuze’s ideas as they relate to education. For example, the concept of vice-diction, while complex and occasionally obscure, is shown in the present thesis (throughout Part Three) to be a powerful conceptual tool for thinking about practices in the particular, and as an alternative conceptual framework to that which might be characterised as ‘Platonist’.

Certain of Deleuze’s texts are engaged with in the thesis more than others. Of particular importance are a number of his earlier works, namely: *Nietzsche and Philosophy*; *Difference and Repetition*; *The Logic of Sense*; and *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Likewise, some of his later texts also assume a degree of importance at times, especially *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*; and *What is Philosophy?* (with Félix Guattari). Other texts are drawn on from time to time (particularly the other ‘biographical’ works on Bergson, Hume, Francis Bacon, Proust, and Foucault). The minor text *The Method of Dramatisation* (the text of a lecture given in 1967) assumes a certain prominence in the thesis owing to its clear and concise engagement with the concept of vice-diction, which helps structure Part Three of the thesis. Perhaps worthy

of note is the secondary position in my engagement with Deleuze of the two *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* texts co-authored with Felix Guattari: *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013b, 2013a). This was not a deliberate strategy, but has the advantage of avoiding some of Deleuze and Guattari's more famous formulations (lines of flight; rhizomes; de/territorialisation) which have been put to use in an educational context before (see the brief review of the literature below), and arguably would lose some of their potency with repetition in the present thesis. This is not to say that the thesis avoids Deleuze's neologisms entirely: expect an extended engagement with concepts such as the event, virtuality, signs, the Idea, and the aforementioned vice-diction. Finally, the two Cinema Books (Deleuze, 1986a, 1989) also play a minor role in spite of some of the clearest formulations of Deleuze's engagement with concepts of temporality and virtuality deriving from Bergson. It is somewhat provocative to the reader to bring these Deleuzian terms up without any explanation as to their meaning. I ask the reader's patience and forbearance – the technical language of Deleuze and others will be unpacked as the thesis progresses, and I hope that these complex ideas are expressed with an appropriate degree of clarity.

Alongside the writings of Deleuze himself, the thesis draws on the work of those that Deleuze himself drew on, in particular the triumvirate of Nietzsche, Spinoza and Leibniz. Typically, my engagement with these philosophers is through the lens of Deleuze, but they also speak in their own right from time to time. Other philosophers whom Deleuze interpreted at some point in his own work will also be drawn on at various points, and these include Bergson, Lucretius, Hume, Tarde, Whitehead, Freud, Foucault, Klossowski, and Simondon. Standing to one side of Deleuze, there will be passing mention of the work of Wittgenstein, Derrida and Latour, where the thought of these thinkers is sympathetic to Deleuze's own project, and I merely seek to point out these resonances rather than engage with the work of these theorists in a sustained way. The phenomenological tradition is represented here primarily through the work of Merleau-Ponty rather than the likes of Heidegger or Husserl, although the reader may find traces of these thinkers, too. I draw, too, upon various of Deleuze's subsequent interpreters, in particular Manuel DeLanda, Ronald Bogue and Henry Somers-Hall. This secondary literature has been invaluable in approaching the often difficult primary texts, though I refer to Deleuze's own work as a matter of priority. Finally, in chapter 13 there is a sustained engagement with a strand of recent cognitive neuroscience. While not of a

philosophical nature, this work serves to illustrate some of the broader points I am trying to make about perception and cognition in Part Three of the thesis.

Deleuze thus provides a philosophical centre of gravity around which other philosophers have been drawn (by Deleuze himself), or have been drawn to. Perhaps the common ground that pulls this diverse range of philosophers together is a concern with *becoming*, with how things come to be the way they are, and what structures the conditions for their becoming something else. Alongside this concern is an interest in seeking to engage with that which is not immediately apparent, in the underlying mechanisms and structures that shape our world. I take this emphasis on change and becoming (and what permits it to occur, often below the surface) to be a useful perspective to adopt in the study of education, for learning itself can be thought of as a process of transformation, of change and becoming⁸. The work of the present thesis seeks to add weight to this perspective, and seeks to foreground those philosophical concepts and traditions that help us to think in this way. An interest in ‘structures’ and that which lies ‘below the surface’ is clearly the domain of metaphysics, and I concede from the outset that the present thesis is preoccupied with the metaphysical in relation to its subject. There is arguably therefore a risk that the thesis could become an exercise in abstraction, far removed from our direct experience of education. I seek therefore to assure the reader that this will not be the case, and what ‘grounds’ the present work is its focus on Learning Development itself, particularly on its practices as experienced.

Of course, I am not the first to consider the thought of Deleuze as it applies to education, and it will be useful to point out some earlier scholarship, and how my own engagement aligns or diverges with it. Cole (2017) provides a recent and comprehensive introduction to ‘Deleuze studies in education’, and the key points relevant to the present study will be summarised below. Before that, however, it is worthwhile sketching some of the recent scholarship relating the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze to education, and noting how the present thesis intersects with this.

While it is somewhat difficult to summarise my own position in relation to the multiplicity of perspectives on Deleuze and education that I have attempted to distil and summarise below, particularly at this early stage, there are nevertheless certain ways of

⁸ See the work of Barnett (2009; 2011) for an account of learning-as-becoming, particularly as it pertains to higher education.

positioning myself in relation to these strands of enquiry. Many of the themes and perspectives outlined in the brief overview which follows will be drawn out and discussed in more detail in the main body of the thesis. The overview below is therefore not intended to present a detailed critical discussion of these ideas and themes, but merely to identify them so that the reader can situate the work of the present thesis in the context of the wider scholarship.

The most notable scholars writing on Deleuze and education in recent years include Inna Semetsky, Diana Masny, Ronald Bogue, and David Cole, with notable contributions from John Morss (Morss, 2000; 2004), Monica Waterhouse and Noel Gough (Gough, 2004). Other authors have drawn on aspects of Deleuze in relation to education (for example: Roy, 2004; Standish, 2008; (Munday, 2012); Snir (2018), but those listed above constitute a particular ‘constellation’ of scholarship on Deleuze and education worthy of extended consideration.

Semetsky is a central figure writing on Deleuze and education. In 2006 she published the monograph *Deleuze, Education and Becoming*. Since then she has edited or co-edited and contributed material to collections on Deleuze and education, including: *Nomadic Education: Variations on a theme by Deleuze and Guattari* (Semetsky, 2008); a special edition of *Policy Futures in Education*, ‘The untimely Deleuze: Some implications for educational policy’, for which she wrote the introduction alongside co-editor Diana Masny (Semetsky and Masny, 2011) and contributed a paper with frequent collaborator Terence Lovat (Semetsky and Lovat, 2011); and she edited or co-edited the collections *Deleuze and Education* (Semetsky and Masny, 2013). In addition, Semetsky has also published numerous papers on the subject of Deleuze and education (notably Semetsky, 2007; Semetsky, 2009; and Semetsky, 2010). Semetsky’s earlier work looked at Deleuze’s intersections with Dewey, and more recently this approach has been augmented through the application of Deleuze’s thought in the domains of edusemiotics, and the junction between Eastern and Western mystic traditions (including aspects of Jungian Depth Psychology and hermeticism), and the contemporary science of complexity. Through writing that is both prolific and wide-ranging, Semetsky has advanced Deleuze as a philosopher of education primarily by emphasising the creative, active, and relational (affective) aspects of his philosophy in the context of learning.

Diana Masny, whose work focuses on the area of multiple literacies, was the co-editor of the special issue of *Policy Futures in Education* (Semetsky and Masny, 2011), and of *Deleuze and Education* (Semetsky and Masny, 2013), both with Inna Semetsky, and co-edited and contributed to *Multiple Literacies Theory: a Deleuzian Perspective* with David Cole (Masny and Cole, 2009). She also edited the collection *Cartographies of Becoming in Education: A Deleuze-Guattari Perspective* (Masny, 2013). Masny's perspective on Deleuze and education (particularly in younger learners) focuses on multiple literacies, which emphasises the complex *becoming* of learning (Masny, 2010). Her work on Deleuze frequently focuses on the 'rhizomatic' (complex chains of interconnection with no central organising principle), and emphasises the link between thought and action (*praxis*).

Ronald Bogue has written extensively on Deleuze, including several monographs (including *Deleuze and Guattari* (Bogue, 1989)), and he has a particular interest in Deleuze's intersection with both cinema and literature. Bogue also co-edited a significant collection on Deleuze and Asia (Bogue, Chiu and Lee, 2014). His latter work engages more frequently with education, including contributing the preface to *Multiple Literacies Theory: a Deleuzian Perspective* (Masny and Cole, 2009), and chapters in both *Nomadic Education: Variations on a theme by Deleuze and Guattari* (Semetsky, 2008) and *Deleuze and Education* (Semetsky and Masny, 2013). Of particular significance is his emphasis on the relation between learning, problems, and signs, which foregrounds the 'entering into relations' of learning (Bogue, 2004). As will be seen, the idea of relationality is a key preoccupation of the present thesis.

David Cole is the author of *Educational life forms: Deleuzian teaching and learning* (Cole, 2011). He is also co-editor of *Multiple Literacies Theory: a Deleuzian Perspective* (Masny and Cole, 2009), alongside Diana Masny, and contributed chapters to her collection *Cartographies of Becoming in Education: A Deleuze-Guattari Perspective* (Masny, 2013), and Semetsky's *Nomadic Education: Variations on a theme by Deleuze and Guattari* (Semetsky, 2008). Cole's work places emphasis on the creative aspects of learning, and on Deleuze's materialism ((Cole, 2012). Both of these areas foreground the concept of immanence (rather than transcendence and fixed categories) and its relation to learning. This in turn brings to the fore notions of the body and space as it pertains to the learning environment. Cole also draws Deleuzian ideas into the

context of globalisation and education. His 2017 overview on Deleuze studies in education is summarised below.

Monica Waterhouse contributed a paper in special edition of *Policy Futures in Education* (vol. 9(4), 2011) and a chapter in *Multiple Literacies Theory: a Deleuzian Perspective* (Masny and Cole, 2009).. In addition to her work on Multiple Literacies, she has also drawn Deleuzian thinking into citizenship and migrant education.

Noel Gough contributed a chapter to *Nomadic Education: Variations on a theme by Deleuze and Guattari* (Semetsky, 2008) and wrote the foreword to Cole's monograph *Educational life forms: Deleuzian teaching and learning* (Cole, 2011). Gough's work on education research makes frequent reference to Deleuze (and Guattari), specifically in terms of Deleuze's materialism and the way it relates to complexity, globalisation, and the 'trans-human'.

John Morss has written two very significant papers on Deleuze in an educational context, both relating Deleuze to Morss' own research interests in critical psychology. The key papers he published on Deleuze (Morss, 2000; 2004) pre-date the inter-linked work of the authors above, but constitute what one might consider an 'early' deployment of Deleuze's thinking in the domain of educational research.

In 2017, David Cole published 'Deleuze Studies in Education' as part of the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education (Cole, 2017). This comprehensive overview conveniently brings together recent thinking on the contribution of Deleuze's (and Felix Guattari's) philosophy on education. The key points that Cole highlights that are relevant to the present thesis are summarised here. Perhaps most significantly is that Cole identifies three influences on Deleuze's work that have particular pertinence to the application of his ideas on education: Spinoza, Bergson and Nietzsche. Much of the present thesis was completed before the publication of Cole's review, so it is interesting that these three thinkers are also the main touchstones in the present thesis too. One key difference, which has been noted earlier, is that Cole identifies the two 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia' books written with Felix Guattari (*Anti-Oedipus; A Thousand Plateaus*) as perhaps holding the most promise for the philosophy of education. By contrast, the present thesis does not engage heavily with these works. Partly this has been to control the scale of the analysis, and partly because my own focus has been largely 'micro-cosmic' rather than on the broader scales of analysis represented by these works. A point

that Cole makes in his analysis of the significance of *A Thousand Plateaus* to the philosophy of education that is highly relevant – central even – the present thesis is expressed as follows:

Schools, universities, and all places of learning have their own regimes of signs that set up modes of subjectification and double articulations about what learning means and doesn't mean (Cole, 2017, p. 13).

Part three of the present thesis takes these ideas up (without employing some of the terminology) from the perspective of Learning Development and elaborates on the mechanisms whereby this occurs.

Three further final aspects of Deleuze's philosophy discussed by Cole that are relevant to the present thesis should be noted. The first is that Deleuze's thinking (via Nietzsche) 'challenges any sense of a "one size fits all" approach to education' (Cole, 2017, p. 8). This will be one of the emergent themes in the present thesis relating to Learning Development. Also in relation to Nietzsche is the way Deleuze argues for a 'new image of thought' that challenges normative values. As the reader will see, the challenging of normativity in relation to the practice of Learning Development is a central theme of the thesis. Finally, there is the broad point that Deleuze's philosophy emphasises the 'fundamentally open, connective and emergent nature of ... concepts' (Cole, 2017, p.3), creating an approach to thought that shifts from "the known" to "what can be done" (Cole, 2017, p. 1). This too is a central tenet of the present thesis, which seeks to uncover not what is known about Learning Development, but aspires instead to examine the conditions which structure its emergence in each particular instance of its practice.

These authors have been singled out for attention primarily for the way they collectively constitute a 'moment' in the scholarship of Deleuze and education, particularly between 2006 and 2013 when they (with the exception of Morss) were collectively involved in each other's work in a particularly convoluted and entangled way. In many ways, this represented a 'coming of age' of scholarship on Deleuze and education, and laid the foundations for Cole's 2017 contribution to the Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Education. That there is a place in such a resource for an extended entry entitled *Deleuze Studies in Education* is in no small part down to the critical mass this moment in scholarship represented. Since that time, most have continued to engage with Deleuze

and education in some way, each on their own particular trajectories, and often with new collaborators. My own work in the present thesis can be seen as a continuation and extension of these strands of philosophical and educational enquiry.

The first thing to say is that my own reading of Deleuze does not diverge radically from the emphasis given to it by other scholars of Deleuze and education. As Cole's (2017) summary makes clear, while Deleuze does not explicitly position his work as 'philosophy of education', his entire approach to philosophy is 'pedagogical' insofar as it seeks to engage with, and transform, the world in an immanent and creative way (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994)). The scholarship summarised above almost uniformly emphasises this aspect of Deleuze's work in its relevance to education, and my own perspective is no exception. Secondly, like the scholars cited above, Deleuze's work provides a convenient 'staging point' for the exploration of particular themes and ideas with a fresh perspective. As will be made clear in Part Three of the present thesis, the staging point for me will be Deleuze's radical alternative to a form of 'categorical' thinking that permeates Western metaphysics (the mechanisms of which will be examined in detail in Part Two). Finally, like many of the scholars cited, Deleuze's approach to the relation of one to another via his engagement with the work of Spinoza (affects) and Nietzsche (power), alongside his metaphysical positioning vis a vis the virtual and the actual via his engagement with the work of Bergson are both particularly important aspects of the present work.

What is new in the present work is the way these ways of thinking are brought to bear on the subject of Learning Development in particular, and, more broadly, on the dynamics of the contemporary higher education milieu in the United Kingdom at the start of the 21st Century. The present thesis places its emphasis on the former (Learning Development) rather than the latter, but issues in contemporary HE are never far from the analysis as presented.

5. Structure of the thesis: Sign-posting the chapters

The present thesis is divided into three parts, comprising 17 chapters in total, along with the present introduction, and a conclusion. The first part *Learning Development as a Practice* introduces the narrative device of Lucy as a way of highlighting particular Learning Development Practices. The five chapters that comprise the first part of the

thesis seek to situate the practice of Learning Development as consisting of a series of 'normative crises', problems and disruptions to the usual routines whereby the practitioner becomes reflectively self-aware of what they are doing, and begins to think in terms of situating their own practices in relation to the practices of others. A contrast is drawn between the 'Particular Case' of practice, and the 'Aggregate View' of practice, that is, between what the practitioner experiences herself, and what she considers 'normal' beyond the scope of her own practices. The first part of the thesis ends by looking at how this process of engagement with practice can lead the practitioner to think in terms of a 'Universal Picture' or practice, an 'ideal' of Learning Development. This first part of the thesis aims to pave the way for the analysis which follows, and consequently does not lean particularly heavily on the work of Deleuze or any other philosopher, though it does make some reference to the literature on Learning Development itself in order to provide more stable ground for the later analysis.

The second part of the thesis, *Aspects of Learning Development Practice* charts five ways of considering Learning Development as a practice, taking the situation sketched in the first part of the thesis as its starting point. The five chapters that comprise this section commence with an examination of practice as an habitual routine, arguing that the disruptions experienced by the practitioner in the first part of the thesis are all forms of disruptions to habit, which serve to destabilise the Learning Developer and compel them into a form of reflection, so called 'represented practice'. This is the move from the 'Particular Case' to the 'Aggregate View'. This in turn precipitates a form of 'reactive practice (after Nietzsche), a consequence of the shift from habitual action to reflective thought, and the gulf that opens up between them. This places a degree of psychic pressure on the practitioner. The result of attempts to alleviate this sense of distress is a form of 'innovative practice', which seeks to return the practitioner to a state of routine. Finally, a state of "immanent practice" is counterposed to the increasingly nihilistic stance encouraged by this 'slide' from habit, through representation and reactivity, to an attempted innovation that seeks to return to the habitual, The notion of "immanent practice" serves to open up ways of thinking about Learning Development practices in a way that is informed by Deleuze's conceptualisation of immanence and serves to form a bridge between Part Two and the final part of the thesis. Part Two of the thesis is therefore very much concerned with presenting an account of the psychic dynamics of the Learning Developer (through 'Lucy') and attempts to show *how* the consequences of the slide from the particular to

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the universal might manifest, with the work of Nietzsche (particularly Deleuze's Nietzsche) as the touchstone.

The third part of the thesis attempts to outline an alternative way of thinking, based around the so-called 'Method of Dramatisation' of Deleuze. The seven chapters comprising this third section take the first two parts of the thesis as their starting point, and introduce a range of Deleuzian terminology with a view to applying a range of his concepts to the problems that have already been introduced. It is hoped that the concepts and terminology will be introduced in a sequence that permits the reader to follow the development of the ideas, rather than coming along all at once. The section commences (chapter 11) by contrasting the 'ideal' of the Universal Picture with Deleuze's concept of the 'Idea'⁹. The next five chapters (12-16) bring in Deleuze's engagement with Bergson (virtual/actual); Spinoza (affects; composition); Leibniz and Tarde (implication; monads) and others, in order to construct an understanding of the particular in relation to Learning Development that permits an openness of understanding and resists rigid categorical boundaries. Key to this analysis is Deleuze's concept of 'vice-diction', which is prominent in his early work. The meaning of this term, and its application form the spine around which this third part is built. Chapter 12 introduces the 'method of dramatisation', which is drawn out in more detail both theoretically and in terms of its application to Learning Development in chapters 13-16. The final chapter, chapter 17, and the conclusion itself seek to draw together the key ideas and concepts, along with the implications for Learning Development, with the conclusion presenting some ways of taking the analysis further, as well as evaluating its overall significance more widely.

6. A note on the use of terms

A degree of consistency has been attempted in the present thesis with respect to which certain ideas and concepts are expressed in the writing. As much of the subject matter of this thesis consists of attempts at 'rethinking' or approaching certain things in a new way, the nuances of expression are worthy of comment at the outset.

⁹ Deleuze's reappropriation of the ideal in Plato as the Idea (with a capital I) – see note on capitalisation at the end of this introduction.

As with ‘rethinking’ above, concepts or ideas which are not entirely clear, or which could be interpreted in a number of different ways will be presented in ‘scare quotes’. These are a signal to the reader that the language being employed is not intended to have a technical definition or a precise meaning, but that certain associations or linguistic resonances are being reached for in order for the reader to approach a degree of understanding. As the name ‘scare quotes’ implies, they are intended to warn the reader that what is being discussed lies at the fringes of understanding.

By contrast, capitalisation will be employed when terms are being used with a particular meaning or intended definition – even if that definition has yet to be fully explicated and explained. They are thereby a signal to the reader that terms are being used in a technical sense. This will apply particularly to neologisms that have been devised to carry forward the concepts being developed in the present thesis. Most notably, these include the terms Particular Case, Aggregate View and Universal Picture, which will be introduced in outline very early on, and only fully ‘defined’ (note the scare quotes) in the final chapter. The technical terms employed by other authors will be presented in sentence case (e.g. monad, virtual, actual, event), except where that author specifically employs the capitalised version (e.g. Deleuze’s Idea).

Italics will be used for emphasis, particularly when a term is being introduced for the first time; or used when a word is being drawn from another language.

Part One: Learning Development as a Practice

Chapter 1: A day in the life

A busy day ahead. It is the first term, week seven, and teaching is in full swing.

My name is Lucy. I am a lecturer in Learning Development at a 'new' UK university. I work as part of a small team called the Teaching and Learning Support Service (TaLSS, pronounced 'Talis') based in the Library. Our remit is to work directly with students in support of their learning, as well as with academic colleagues in order to indirectly enhance student learning through areas like curriculum and assessment design. This is a fairly typical day for me at this time of the year. Time to get going.

9-10am: In-curriculum teaching

Technical report writing for first year engineering students. So, a lecture first thing. It's a room I've never taught in before in the Old Engineering Building, a large lecture theatre, and it took me a while to find it and get my PowerPoint presentation going, so I'm running a couple of minutes late already. Great start to the day! This is a lecture on writing a technical report to first year Engineering students. There's a fair few here. There are 125 enrolled on the course, and the turnout looks reasonable to me. I circulate a paper register just in case the electronic attendance monitoring system isn't working properly. They have a 1,000 word report due in three weeks time and this is their first taste of academic writing at university. I put the session together with John, a relatively new lecturer in the School of Engineering. John was concerned that the reports written by last year's cohort of first years were quite poor – lots of basic errors and poor structuring of the writing. Apparently the report is worth 25% of the total module mark and the high failure rate last year caused some anxiety among the students, affecting their confidence – they simply weren't prepared for formal academic writing. So that's why I'm here. I met with John for a coffee over the summer on the recommendation of one of his colleagues

who had worked with TaLSS before, and together we worked through what we could do to help the students out. The only problem is that this is the only slot he could spare – a single 50 minute lecture. I would have preferred to run writing workshops in smaller seminar groups, but there was no opportunity to do this. To be honest, I'm a bit concerned about whether I can do what John wants, which is to 'teach them the fundamentals of writing' in under an hour. I did express my reservations about this, but John just seemed so happy with what I was offering and seems confident that this will 'fix' the problem of poor student writing.

The session seems to go...well, okay I suppose. No disasters. The content is focused on the upcoming assessment and that engages the students at the outset. As the session goes on, it starts to feel a bit flat, as more and more students yawn and turn to their phones. I start to wonder if the content is appealing. I'm no scientist, I'm a humanities graduate. John assured me that the content and pitch was fine when I sent him my draft slides. Maybe it's just too abstract for them at this stage? I finish on time. The students file out. There are no questions.

10-12pm: One-to-one tutorials

I don't really have time to dwell on the lecture as I have to race across campus to the library in order to meet the first of my four tutees. TaLSS offers students 30 minute one-to-one tutorial slots that they can book online, and this morning I have 4 back-to-back tutorial sessions booked. Students can talk about any aspect of their academic work, and the sessions book out quickly. The library provides logistical support (reception, statistics processing, sending out reminders and so on). The tutorials take place in a small consultation room at the back of the library which sometimes doubles as a staff meeting room. There's a table, four chairs and a computer. It has a view over the campus and is bright and airy, with pamphlets and leaflets on academic writing and study skills available on a carousel by the door. It's a pretty neat set up.

My first tutee is waiting for me when I get there, and we go into the room together. Vera is a mature international Masters student studying architecture. We've met before, and Vera has seen several of the other TaLSS tutors, too. She is doing quite well, but is concerned about her readiness to undertake the final dissertation, particularly because of what she considers to be her poor English language skills and a lack of confidence in written work generally as her course is mainly practical in nature. We talk grammar (not my strong point) and sentence structure over our 30 minutes together. As part of our discussion I recommend Vera see colleagues in the English Language Development Centre, a separate service within the University. I'm not sure my advice on grammar was what she needed, to be honest.

Next up is Chuka, a first year Pharmacy student. He has never been to a TaLSS tutorial before and is quite nervous. He has been advised by his personal tutor to attend the tutorial because of concerns over his referencing uncovered after a formative report was submitted electronically via Turnitin with a similarity score of 43%. His tutor has talked to Chuka about plagiarism and bad academic practice, which has confused and frightened him as he felt he understood the assessment task and was comfortable with writing the report. Now he is not so sure. I go over the broad conventions of referencing with him and explains its function and purpose within academic writing, before turning to the practicalities of writing references into a text which we work through together using the submitted essay. We also discuss the concept of 'voice', and how to integrate 'expert voices' with his own original analysis. This bit is my own take on referencing, and goes beyond the simple mechanics. I've found students take to the idea quite well and Chuka leaves the tutorial feeling a little more comfortable. This buoys me considerably after the tough lecture and the somewhat ineffectual session with Vera.

The next tutee doesn't show up. I check the booking system and don't recognise the name, that of a first year business student who wanted to "work on her report" (according to the booking record). In all honesty, I don't mind so

much as this gives me a chance to catch my breath and gather my thoughts. But I don't get the chance, for a student I know quite well, Eleanor, is peering at the door and, seeing me alone, says she wants a 'quick chat'. This quickly turns into an unscheduled tutorial. Eleanor, a third year nursing student, is confused about how to approach the writing of her research methodology section on her dissertation. I happen to know a great deal about research methodology but I do wonder momentarily whether it is appropriate to share this with Eleanor, as I get a sense that this 'content knowledge' is the domain of the Nursing course, and not the role of TaLSS to convey and develop. However, it is clear that Eleanor can't progress without some form of clarification, and as I am able to provide it then and there, I do so. Eleanor has what I think of as a 'lightbulb moment', suddenly understanding how to distinguish one approach from the other, and leaves feeling satisfied that she can take things forward herself from here.

The final tutee arrives a little late. Dav is a final year business studies student who has been doing quite well until recently. He has been averaging a high 2:1 but wants to improve sufficiently to get a First. He heard about TaLSS from a friend who spoke very highly of her experience. I ask Dav if he can remember any of the feedback he has got for his submitted work, and he produces a printout of his last essay with comments. He got 55% for the work, a reasonably passable mark, but this is the lowest mark he has got, and far from the First he so desires. I read the feedback and draw Dav's attention to comments that state his work is 'too descriptive' and 'lacks analysis'. Bingo. This is bread-and-butter stuff for us. Every discipline has its distinctive features, but the idea of 'critical analysis' runs like a seam through the assessment regime, and this provides a useful 'way in' for students across the university. I ask Dav what he thinks these comments might mean. He is unsure, but hazards a guess. We then work through the concept of critical analysis and how this can apply to his work, and how that in turn can help him structure his essay. Before he leaves, I ask him what he will do next. Dav makes it clear that he now has a better

understanding of how to approach the writing on a practical level, and we part on good terms. Job done. I probably won't see him again.

12-1pm: Lunch

I went straight from home to the lecture this morning, so I finally make it to my desk at around noon. I log onto my own computer and munch on a sandwich. My colleague Paul (a specialist in dyslexia support) comes in and we chat a little. I attend to some important emails: a response to my line manager Rita about an important meeting coming up this afternoon; confirmation of a location for another meeting last thing; a response to another colleague (Georgia, the e-learning specialist) about teaching next week. I send John from Engineering a brief report about that morning's lecture. Paul and I talk briefly about a project we are working on to support staff writing for research publication. I manage a glance at a draft of a research paper that I haven't got around to finishing yet. I must get around to finishing that. But a glance will have to do for now – I finish my lunch a little early in order to run through my upcoming workshop presentation. I save the slideshow to my USB stick, print out the register, and go to collect some books from the library shelves. On my way out I runs into another of my TaLSS colleagues, Richard (peer learning and curriculum design specialist), who waves cheerily, although we don't have time to stop and say a proper hello.

1-2pm: Open workshop on critical reading

TaLSS run a series of workshops open to all students at the university. They are clustered in themed weeks throughout the year (including the summer vacation in order to appeal to non-traditional undergraduates like the nurses, postgrads and re-sit students). Workshops are advertised centrally via Blackboard (our VLE) announcements, and through our various faculty contacts. Students book online via the Library's website and numbers are capped at 50, partly because of the interactive pedagogic approach, and partly because that's how many students we can squeeze into the space, a flat room with tables and chairs arranged 'cafe-style' facing the state-of-the art projection screen.

This week the theme to all the workshops is 'Approaching your first assignment' as there are a lot of assessments due by the end of the term (in week 12). I'm leading several workshops this week, but today's is on 'critical reading'. As I set up, I take a quick glance through the register of students who have booked onto the session and see that they are from a wide variety of faculties and programmes. Even though the themed week is intended to appeal to first year students there are students from all levels on the booking sheet, including Masters students and a PhD researcher who is also a member of staff. That wide range of experience and ability always makes 'pitching' the session difficult. All 50 places have been booked and there is a significant waiting list. The room is half full.

I've developed and modified this particular workshop over several years, with contributions from my colleagues, who have also delivered variations on it. In contrast with the morning's lecture this session is pretty well 'road-tested'. As this particular workshop is open to all students it is also more 'generic' than some of the faculty-based teaching that we do. It consists of a presentation on reading styles and open discussion with workshop participants about their approaches to reading and note-taking. Then I give a presentation on styles of note-taking and its link with academic writing and referencing practices. The workshop ends with a practical reading (the ones I've just picked up off the library shelves) to see how they can apply some of the principles outlined and how much they feel they understand. This is a pretty challenging task, so I have to be quite buoyant and encouraging. I talk about dyslexia and signpost further support across the university. Not all students declare a learning difference (we don't like the term 'disability'), and we suspect many students don't even know if they have one or not, so we have to consider the possibility in everything we deliver.

At the end of the 50-minute session, I collect feedback on post-it notes and take back the register I circulated. About 26 students were in attendance out of the

50 bookings, including three that didn't book who have signed their names at the bottom of the sheet. The feedback is generally positive. This is a surprise, because I felt that the session almost entirely missed the mark for most of the students. Most of the comments, however, are positive, if rather noncommittal ('good'; 'interesting session'; 'useful'). I do wonder about the usefulness of collecting immediate feedback, but we are obliged to collect it to 'demonstrate effectiveness', and in this instance I don't know whether to trust my own impressions and instincts (the session went quite badly) or the feedback (it went quite well). I gather together the scattered library books and chat to a lingering student who clearly needs the encouragement. I'd like to give her a little more time, but I've got to make it to a meeting.

2-4pm: University Learning and Teaching Committee meeting

I quickly make my way from the library to the Grade II heritage-listed Registry Building where a number of senior administrative staff offices are located. Today I am deputising at the University Learning and Teaching Committee for Rita (my line-manager) who is off-campus today to attend a programme validation meeting at a partner college. Rita and I have produced a report on the student engagement project that TaLSS have been working on.

On my way over, I'm greeted by a student I don't recognise, but who recognises me. The student doesn't offer her name but asks if I can help her with an essay. I don't want to be rude, so I chat briefly before apologising and taking my leave. I suggest that the student comes to the regular TaLSS lunchtime drop-in tomorrow (we run them every day of the working week to cope with the students who can't manage to book a tutorial, which are over-subscribed). The student looks a little deflated but agrees to come along. It's doubtful she will.

I arrive a little late, but the meeting has yet to start and several colleagues are chatting and helping themselves to the coffee provided. The room is well-appointed, recently retrofitted and spacious, with a view over a lawned area. Everyone sits around a large oval mahogany boardroom table. In attendance is

the ProVice Chancellor for Curriculum and Teaching, Professor Shears, who will Chair the meeting. There is an administrator who will officiate, representatives from the five faculties, (mostly heads of studies and faculty managers), the University's Quality Assurance Manager, and representatives from IT Services and Marketing. Three student representatives from three of the five faculties are also present. I recognise many of the faces, and the academics I know best from my faculty work smile hello. There is an extensive agenda and a good half a dozen papers which have been circulated prior to the meeting. Printed copies of these are available, but most attendees have brought their own or are reading from tablets and laptops. The mood is fairly light and collegial.

Professor Shears gets the meeting underway and there follows the ritual run-through of brief round-the-table introductions, apologies (quite a number), the minutes of the previous meeting, matters arising and notifications of any other business. The first couple of items on the agenda concern faculty reports from faculty-level committees, and feedback from staff-student committees from the nervous student representatives. Academics from the appropriate faculties deputise for the absent student reps. The students leave once they have delivered their reports.

Forty minutes in, the agenda finally turns to item 3, the TaLSS paper on student engagement, which concerns work we have been undertaking with data sets on student attendance and other metrics on engagement. The aim is to identify those students most in need of supportive intervention and those 'hard to reach' students who do not typically avail themselves of the workshops and tutorials on offer. The project is in a pilot phase, but I've already got deep misgivings about it. I don't want to seem unprofessional, so I don't share these misgivings immediately. I'm not sure Rita would appreciate that, as the project is important for TaLSS in demonstrating to senior management that it is 'efficiently and effectively targeting university resources for student support' as the project plan puts it. So I read through the preliminary findings and ask for questions. The attendees listen patiently. There are some questions, mostly

clarifying criteria for inclusion and privacy issues. I have to restrain myself a bit from agreeing too whole-heartedly with one of the faculty reps (Health Sciences) who shares her own views and is quite strongly critical of the project. I find myself on the back-foot, and I hold my tongue and let her speak. I nod firmly at the points of criticism she raises, but find myself defending our work. I do feel a bit guilty for not backing her up more robustly. Such criticism is by no means universal though, and most of those present are silent at this criticism and the Chair moves the discussion on. A colleague from the Faculty of Humanities is quite interested in the work and asks for further information following the meeting. I don't know him and make a note. Professor Shears thanks me for the thorough report, commenting that if successful it promises to help address a number of retention issues. He offers to let me leave at that point, but I politely decline and stay put. I don't want to miss what's going on more widely. Rita will be expecting a report.

The meeting takes up the remainder of the two hour slot. I take notes for Rita. The mood noticeably darkens when the Marketing Representative speaks about a new initiative to promote the University to high-performing A-level students. Some present are supportive, but most are openly skeptical of its value. Likewise, eyes roll when discussion turns to the new attendance monitoring technology that has caused a number of problems since the start of the term. By the end, everyone is tired, and not a little bit cranky. Professor Shears moves things along in order to wrap up on time. Everyone gratefully leaves. I have a quick chat with Professor Henderson from the Faculty of Humanities (the one I'd never met before) and we agree to arrange a meeting to talk in more depth about the student engagement project. He seems genuinely enthusiastic about TaLSS's work.

4-5pm: Meeting on Curriculum Development

By now I'm fairly tired, it has to be said. From the Registry Building, I make my way to one of the on-campus cafes where I've agreed to meet Pablo, the Adult Nursing programme leader. I rather wish I hadn't made the meeting for this

time (what was I thinking?). But at least it's Pablo. We've known each other for years. Pablo greets me with a smile and offers to buy me a coffee. Yes please! We sit at the back of the cafe and exchange war stories and moan about how knackered we are. Pablo shares a little juicy gossip about a senior colleague. But there's a little business to attend to as well. The second year nurses have reported some anxiety over their research methods assessment due just before Christmas – could I provide an input to discuss how to undertake an effective literature review? Sure. No problem. We discuss the details and Pablo proposes a suitable date. They then turn to a question Pablo has about assessment redesign for another module, something we've worked on together before. I recommend a paper I'd coincidentally read recently that may shed some light.

We chat some more (gossip, really) and finish our coffees. I then return to the office. I update the tutorial records from the morning's tutorials (which I didn't have a chance to do earlier) and briefly checks my emails to find several new arrivals which will have to wait until the morning. One of them is from John in Engineering, expressing disappointment at turnout to the lecture (about 80%, apparently, which I don't think is actually that bad). I have a chance to chat briefly with colleagues Richard and Georgina about a worrying rumour that TaLSS is going to be moved out of the Library into another part of the University. Then it's time to leave for the day.

8-10pm: Coda (Later that Night)

Once the various domestic chores are finished and the kids are in bed, my working day continues. I'm tired, of course, and don't usually work 'off the clock' if I can help it. But I've got to prepare a conference paper on academic peer learning and haven't had time to even think about since before the start of term. The conference is not for a month or so, but I need to work through my approach and read up on some of the more recent literature. I'm a bit out of touch. I'm looking at something on the 'student voice' and co-creation of the curriculum but to be honest I'm not quite sure of my angle yet, even though the conference proposal was submitted months ago. Having read around a little

and made a few notes, my mind begins to wander and I find myself checking my work email account. In my inbox is an email from a student I met in a tutorial at the start of term. I wonder how she got hold of my email address and then remember it is on the Library's website. The student wants me to check her essay and has attached it as a Word document. No chance. I'm too tired to even open it, but reply (probably a bit too brusquely) that it would be more appropriate to discuss face to face – go book a tutorial. Finally logging off, I find myself thinking about TaLSS's website and the work that needs to be done to update it. We put a lot of work into updating and refreshing the website only last summer, but already many of the materials seem out of date and not in line with my current thinking...my current thinking beginning to wind down...

Time to sleep...

Chapter 2: The Particular Case of practice

We have met Lucy, and seen something of her work. The elements of Lucy's account are fictionalised, derived from the actual experiences of the author, selected in order to illustrate the range of my own experiences, and presented in a narrative, reflective form in order to provide us with examples for the discussion which will follow.¹⁰ From an account like this, presented as being somehow 'typical' of the work of a Learning Developer, what can we understand about this field of practice?

The first assumption we must face relates to the 'type' and the 'field' evoked in that last sentence. For something to be 'typical', and for there to be a 'field', we must first of all assume a degree of coherence to Lucy's activities and actions, and this coherence is carried symbolically in the form of the name of the field itself, and its exponent: 'Learning Development'; 'Learning Developer'. We already have before us a vessel that carries something, and if our goal is understanding, that vessel demands to be filled.

We may begin by focusing on Lucy's activities, what she *does*, for surely an understanding of her various undertakings will lead us to an understanding of what she is doing? Going through the account, we can pick out the things that Lucy does: Lucy works in a university; she teaches students; she works in the Teaching and Learning Support Service, based in the library, with colleagues who undertake similar work to her own; she goes to meetings with administrators and academics; she is involved in developing institutional strategies and curriculum development; she organises her own time; she responds to the agendas of others; she worries about things.

But already we encounter problems. *Why* is Lucy doing these things? And which of her activities is most important for us to understand the 'field of practice', the vessel to which the label 'Learning Development' is attached? Much of what she does is also done by others in higher education, so what is distinctively 'Learning Development' about her work? A focus on her activities alone does not explain her reasons for

¹⁰ See the Introduction for a full discussion of the methodological approach taken in the present thesis

undertaking them, and our understanding of what Lucy does is restricted to a list of events that take place one after another. If we are to truly *understand*¹¹ what Lucy is doing, we perhaps need to fathom her motivations, or examine the consequences of what she does. Her activities alone may tell us what she does, but they do not lead us to an understanding of their meaning. What Lucy *does* is a starting point, but we need to see how those activities are connected to one another in order to achieve anything like an understanding.

It is perhaps helpful to notice that Lucy ‘works’: that is, she is employed by the university. The account as presented does not detail her role profile or her conditions of employment, however her job title is presented – she is a ‘Senior Lecturer in Learning Development’. We might begin to answer this important secondary question of *why* Lucy does what she does by pointing out that she is employed to do certain things, and that her employer (the university) therefore expects her to do them. Hence, we can view Lucy’s motivation for action in contractual terms, in terms of discharging an obligation in exchange for remuneration. If we can comprehend what is involved in this role and how it came to be, then might we achieve a greater understanding of the reason why Lucy is doing what she does? The question then turns to the nature of Lucy’s employment and, specifically, the nature of the role she occupies. What exactly does ‘Learning Development’ entail as it pertains to Lucy’s contract of employment? Is it understood in a unitary way, unambiguously by different people? Or are there varying interpretations of what it is that Lucy does – or does not do?

The problem that arises for us when we take this particular path – let us call it the *formal understanding* of Learning Development – is that there is no guarantee for us that Lucy, as a practitioner, would apprehend the formal requirements of her role in precisely the same way as anybody else would (say, a university manager; an academic colleague; a student). Let us imagine for a moment that her role profile requires Lucy to “Undertake teaching activities as appropriate”. The manager may have a particular understanding of what this might entail, and the outputs required (improvements in

11 Understand: “To comprehend; to apprehend the meaning or import of; to grasp the idea of” (OED). But also: “To be thoroughly acquainted or familiar with (an art, profession, etc.); to be able to practise or deal with properly”. The second sense conveyed by the Oxford English Dictionary emphasises that understanding is a requirement for proficient (or ‘proper’) practice. An attempt to come to an understanding thereby conveys an attempt not only not to know *that*, but also to know *how* (Ryle, 1945)

certain metrics, for example); an academic colleague could conceivably have an entirely different understanding (for example, to enable students to understand and pass the second essay assignment); any given student might likewise have their own view of what kind of teaching activities it would be appropriate for Lucy to undertake, and this may change over time (“I just want to pass the assignment”; “I really need to get a First”; “I just don’t get this, and I really want to”). Furthermore, because a role profile is particular to a *particular* role, and to a *particular* institutional interpretation of that role, we are no closer to understanding Learning Development as a ‘field of practice’, with resonance beyond the locality of a particular institution. Any formal understanding of Learning Development is destined to be localised, particular, and open to interpretation by different actors. We have something particular, a given *case* of practice, rather than a *type*¹² of practice that can be applied more generally, in other settings. For Learning Development to be thought of as a ‘field’¹³ of practice (as I have invited the reader to do) there must be more than one instance of those practices. If we were to collect role profiles from across the sector, and subject them to an analysis in order to ascertain their common themes and features, would we not then obtain an understanding of Learning Development as a field, and likewise obtain an insight into what is typical? Very likely is the answer; however, we would still be stuck with the problem of interpretation in the particular case, how that multitude of role profiles translate into actual practices, and, crucially, how those practices evolve and change over time. Whatever insights we might gain from such an analysis (and I am not saying this would not be a worthwhile exercise in its own way), the results may fool us into thinking we have the complete, *definitive*, answer, when in fact we have merely collected the codified interpretations of what is considered appropriate by a particular constituency (that is, by university managers, and in no small part, by Learning Developers themselves). By collating every formal understanding of Learning Development available to us, we would obtain a general view of practices prior to their being interpreted and practiced, a ‘totality’ and a ‘representation’ of practice that differs from actual practices in ways no longer available to us.

12 Type: ‘The general form, structure, or character distinguishing a particular kind, group, or class of beings or objects’ (OED)

13 Field: ‘A particular branch of study or area of expertise or competence; a subject’. Also: ‘An area or sphere of action, enquiry, or interest; a (wider or narrower) range of opportunities, or of objects, for activity or consideration’ (OED)

But in this problem of interpretation and generalisability we have at our disposal a way forward, another path we might follow. What is apparent in the foregoing consideration of a formal understanding of Learning Development is that, whatever it 'is', Learning Development is constituted in some way by its relations. More specifically, the Learning Developer's activities (what Lucy 'does') are necessarily constituted by her relations with others. The very codification of a role profile and the contractual nature of employment signals a relation – with the university as an institutional entity. Any of the terms or conditions that might be enunciated in a role profile, be they narrow or open-ended, will necessitate some interaction and inter-relation with another – managers, administrators, colleagues, students, parents, teachers, other Learning Developers. The contractual nature of Lucy's employment as a Learning Developer provides something of a ground upon which to build an understanding of this as a field of practice not by virtue of its contents, but in the way that it highlights Learning Development's position within higher education's exchange economy. However, in our urge to 'define' Learning Development as a field of practice, and in our desire to be able to say that one activity or another is appropriate and proper to Learning Development (that is, it corresponds with the 'kind, group or class of objects' of the type we recognise as such), we risk a rush to close down the possibilities open to such practices, for such economies of exchange are 'closed', circumscribed, their very definition imposing limits which must not be crossed. Paul Standish (2005) argues something similar through his interpretation of Levinas: there is something deeper at play in higher education than the discharging of obligations in an exchange economy, that is, an economy of 'excess' that derives from the open-ended interpretation of our relations through language. Likewise I argue that we need to keep our understanding of Learning Development 'open', and instead of defining and imposing limits on it, seek instead to understand it through an examination of the relations through which it manifests.

To summarise the argument thus far: we have in 'Learning Development' and the 'Learning Developer' an invitation to characterise a set of practices in higher education in terms of the 'type' of activities they consist of. When we proceed by looking at actual practices – such as those presented (in a fictionalised form) in the account of Lucy's day – we obtain a *particular case* of practice. The expectations around these practices may be codified and defined in a role profile to provide a *formal understanding* of Lucy's work. However, this formal understanding cannot lead us to a 'type' of activity – a

general understanding – as it is restricted to that particular role, and is open to interpretation even at the local level. Even if we were to generalise from a multitude of such formal understandings, we would fail to account for the multitude of localised interpretations and perspectives on actual practices and the way these may shift and change over time. Nevertheless, this problem of interpretation, of multiple and contested understandings of what properly constitutes Learning Development, provides us with a means of proceeding, for we may conclude from the problematic nature of its definition that Learning Development is inherently relational. That is to say, what it comprises, and however it is constituted, Learning Development manifests as a field of practice through the relation of its practitioners to other actors within the milieu of higher education.

There is, however, a further option open to us that we have not yet considered. Why don't we ask Lucy herself to tell us what Learning Development is? Or better still, get her to reflect on her practices in terms of what she actually does.

Chapter 3: Normative crises in practice

Whenever I'm asked at a dinner party "So, what do you do?", I have to think for a moment. If I was a lawyer, or a doctor, or even a teacher, I imagine that's what I'd say: "I'm a lawyer/doctor/teacher". People would understand what I meant – everybody recognises these professions, and although there may be follow-up questions (which area of the law? Which medical speciality? Primary or secondary?), these are informed by an existing understanding. But "I'm a Learning Developer" doesn't have the same effect. Puzzled looks. Follow-up questions. My fumbling efforts at clarification. "Well, I work in a university...I'm a lecturer...I work with students...". I end up sort of stacking things up in a haphazard way. I get the impression that sometimes people think I don't know what I do myself... At other times, for the sake of brevity, I will say: "I help students write essays", but that hardly seems adequate.

Okay, but what do I actually do?

If you look at a typical day's work: I give curriculum-embedded lectures to undergraduate engineering students on report writing; I work one to one with students in tutorials to help them develop their writing style; their use of referencing and academic voice; their approach to research methods; and their critical writing practices; I work in a team to collectively enhance our teaching and learning practices; I facilitate workshops on critical reading that are open to all students; I liaise with academic colleagues, administrators and senior management to develop and deliver teaching and learning initiatives on 'hard to reach' students; I liaise with academic colleagues to develop bespoke interventions to improve students' academic work on the nursing programme; I develop conference papers based on my own research. What else? I've probably missed something. I have trouble keeping up.

These are specific instances of my practice, and on any another day they would look slightly different – different activities, different interventions, different students, different programmes of study. I'm sure other Learning Developers elsewhere do different things again.

My professional identity, or rather my sense of that identity, doesn't really have a bearing on my doing all of these things. I don't go around thinking "I'm a Learning Developer so I should do this". The activities I've outlined are merely things that I do as part of my work, or happened to do on a particular day.

There are occasions, though, when certain things will happen that cause me to reflect on my day-to-day work, moments where I'm uncertain about how to proceed. Like whether it is feasible to teach writing to engineering students in a single lecture; like whether I ought to be talking to a student about something that they are taught on their course; like whether I should let my personal feelings about a university initiative over-ride my sense of obligation to the university. I guess other people have these doubts too, but we don't really talk about them all that much. Maybe through a sense of pride in being a 'professional'? It is at those moments my professional sensibility comes into more acute focus for me and gets me reflecting on what I should be doing, on what is considered normal or proper for someone doing the kind of job that I do. You know, should I be doing the things I do? What should I be doing?

In the preceding section the problem of interpretation and generalisation was raised in relation to building an understanding of Learning Development. We now turn to how the Learning Developer comes to understand their own practices in a reflexive way (that is to say, in a way that enables them to consider what they do and respond to those actions). We can devise a formal understanding, codified in a role profile, perhaps put together by looking at comparable roles in other institutions and collating what we deem to be the common features. Or we can ask a Learning Developer directly, as we have with Lucy, and they can provide a response. In each instance, we obtain at least a partial understanding grounded in a particular case – an institutional setting, an individual practitioner, a given situation. We have seen that a consideration of Learning

Development as a field of practice comes with an insistence on identifying a ‘type’ of activity shared or in common, but that this contrasts with the particularity of instances of practice. Attempts to ‘characterise’ practices, to define them – perhaps for the benefit of a role profile or a dinner guest – can lead the practitioner to fumble around for distinctive features or characteristic elements which can vary from setting to setting, from practitioner to practitioner, from moment to moment.

This very fluidity of professional self-characterisation is deeply problematic to the practitioner of Learning Development, but only sporadically so. For the most part, the practitioner practices without stepping out of that practice to compare what they do with other practitioners, or to try to characterise the essential features of their practice. Practice is typically routine, non-reflexive, ordinary. We can think of the practitioner as being absorbed by their practice, enveloped by and within it, even unaware of it in the sense that they are not continually self-conscious of their actions and reactions, their words and deeds. Unchallenged, the practitioner goes about her business, and everything is ‘normal’.

There are, however, instances where routinised practice is disrupted. These are the moments where the practitioner is challenged in some way, and forced back upon themselves in a reflexive manner. The most obvious example of this is when the practitioner is new to practice, when there is, as yet, no routine to disrupt. In that instance a role profile or a contract of employment can be seen as a living document, for it guides the new practitioner as to what they ought to be doing. But it is not unreasonable to suggest that there comes a time when a practitioner stops reading their role profile and simply engages in practice. Any formal understanding of their work is absorbed, even forgotten.

A new activity can be challenging and will remain so until routine is built up. Think of the new driver who has to think before they act, a stressful process until they get used to moving their body in a new way. What was once novel (even terrifying) becomes integrated into mental and bodily practice.¹⁴ This habituation or routinisation can be

14 In cognitive neuroscience way may distinguish between type 1 and type 2 processing, the former consisting of pre-conscious autonomic responses, the latter being the reflective, conscious operation of the brain. According to Dual Process Theory, both brain systems function simultaneously and in parallel. Learning to drive, or any form of habituation or routinisation, may be considered from

seen to apply to a range of practices, including work practices. The Learning Developer, once habituated into a particular role and working environment is no exception, and much of their teaching, liaison, development work and so on will be of a more or less routine nature (“There’s another committee meeting this afternoon...”; “I only have tutorials today, so not much on...”). Over time, and with repetition, activities that once required thought and consideration, and which might have inspired stress or anxiety, become ordinary, ‘normal’. As with our experienced and relaxed driver, however, there will be occasions when the sudden awareness of a rabbit in the headlights will disrupt the routine nature of the activity.

As with our startled driver, the disruption experienced by the Learning Developer will not immediately precipitate a switch from a pre-conscious, non-reflective state into a conscious, reflective one; rather, the immediate response in both cases will be reactive and – most likely – defensive. Only at a point of relative safety, when the crisis has been attended to, will either the driver or our Learning Developer be in a position to reflect on what has just happened. Whether or not they will then return to their prior routine will rather depend on what emerges from their reflection, but it is fairly safe to say that such a return will not be immediate, for the process of conscious self-reflection itself represents an altogether slower prospect than pre-conscious, habituated action. The driver and the practitioner may continue to act (although either of them may decide to remove themselves from having to act by ‘pulling over’, literally or figuratively), but such actions in a reflexive frame of mind will be far from habitual or routine.

Absorption in the task at hand is no longer in prospect, all actions now deliberate and thought-through until a new status quo can be established. Let us now leave our shaken driver behind and look in more detail at what all of this means for the Learning Developer. In the practice of Learning Development, routinised or ‘normal’ activity can be seen to be disrupted in a number of different ways, each representing a crisis of ‘normativity’. We will now make use of Lucy’s experiences to explore these so-called normative crises in more detail.

The key point to remember here is that it is during the normative crises discussed below that representations of Learning Development will come to the fore. While the activities

this perspective as a shift from type 2 to type 1 neural processing. For more on Dual Process Theory see Evans and Frankish (2009). These themes will recur in later chapters.

of the practitioner remain routinised and habitual, a sense of what Learning Development actually is, what it does, its purpose and so on, all of these considerations remain largely unconsidered. Put another way, during routine activity, the practitioner does not identify with Learning Development at all. It is only in moments of 'crisis', in fact a disruption to the smooth flow of anticipated activity, that a practitioner's identity as a Learning Developer even emerges at all. The significance of this point will be made clear following a discussion of the different forms of crisis below, but it will suffice to say that what is at stake in all of this is the relative value ascribed by the practitioner to their own particular practices, how they consider their practices in relation to the practices of others, and, ultimately, to a conception of practice that might be thought of as ideal or in some way definitive. I will argue that, as a result of these normative crises, the practitioner is likely to ascribe the highest value to an ideal or definitive understanding of Learning Development. The consequences of this will form the basis of the chapter which follows. But first let us return to Lucy in order to flesh out these 'normative crises' of Learning Development.

The first such normative crisis occurs when the practitioner perceives a limit to their capabilities in a given situation. In their work with learners, staff, managers and administrators, the practitioner senses that what they are setting out to achieve may not be achievable. The objective they are seeking to attain may have been set by themselves or others, but what instigates this particular crisis is the question that arises in the practitioner's mind: Can this be done?

This first crisis can be characterised as a *crisis of expectation*. Expectations here may be their own, or the expectations of others. An outcome or objective is anticipated with respect to a particular scenario or situation in which the Learning Developer undertakes some activity relating to their work. This can be seen as a projected future in which that activity has been undertaken successfully and the outcome has been realised as anticipated. The crisis manifests when the Learning Developer first senses that this anticipated future may not come to pass.

I wrestle with the unfamiliar IT set up in an unfamiliar lecture hall in the Old Engineering Building. The first year engineering students file in and take their seats. My presentation loaded up and ready to go, I take a moment to flick

through my notes, sketched onto a printout of the slideshow. Many of the slides have been adapted from other presentations to other cohorts of students, and I've added examples from engineering texts, and have incorporated an engineering metaphor to help explain what I'm trying to say about the writing process. There are a lot of slides here – this is my one shot to 'teach' these students about academic writing.

I recall the hopeful expectation of my colleague John, the engineering professor who I'd met to plan the session. This 50 minute lecture was the only space in the curriculum available to address the problem of poor academic writing in previous cohorts on the student's technical report, due in 5 weeks time. I remember telling John at the time that I thought the timing was less than ideal – first year students are unlikely to have even thought about starting a report 5 weeks out from the deadline, and my experience tells me that without this imperative it will be difficult to engage the majority of the students sufficiently. But John seemed almost insistent that what I had to offer would be 'fantastic' and 'just what we need'. I told him that 50 minutes is not long enough for one person to teach 120 students how to write. He seemed dismissive of my concerns: "It will set things off on the right foot". But I do worry that his expectations for the session are not entirely realistic.

I have designed the session to be as appealing as possible, but I've been wary of making it too interactive and activity-based given the short timeframe, the numbers involved, and the cavernous space that I knew we'd be in. I'm worried that what I've got is just a little too didactic, a little too much of me just telling them things. As the students continue to file in and take their seats, I turn through my notes to have a quick look at the slide with my engineering metaphor – all about schematics and construction. I hope it lands. I've packed the presentation with what I hope are visually appealing images, trying to play to what I anticipate is a visual orientation to information on the part of engineers. There was a paper I read about it, a few years ago. I am aware from John that much of their teaching is either very practical and lab based, or else

very traditional in terms of lecture style – bullet points, text, one point after another – and I harbour a lingering doubt that my ‘flashy’ session may seem too alien to them, that it might come across as too distinct and different from their course, too ‘lightweight’ to be accepted as a legitimate addition to it.

That thought flashes through my mind as I contemplate their expectant faces. Dozens of pairs of eyes look up at the title slide: An Introduction to Academic Writing in Engineering. I look back out at the students in the lecture theatre. They simmer down in anticipation of me starting. “An introduction to...”. That’s a defensive gambit, I think to myself. It’s gone 9am. I take one last look across the lecture theatre and wonder to myself: can this be done?

Lucy senses that the anticipated future may not come to pass; or more specifically, the future anticipated by John, the engineering professor. Should she have curtailed these expectations when the two of them had met? Should she have told him, point blank: “this cannot be done?”. Perhaps, but to have done so would have been to admit the limitations of her field of practice, limitations that Lucy herself is not sure of. Her intuitions and experience tell her that her colleagues hopes for the session were unrealistic, and of course she gave voice to her misgivings there and then in an attempt to manage expectations; but she could not be *certain* that it could not be done, and did not want to fail before even trying. Put another way, the attempt is a way to test the limits of her practice, and this very awareness invokes a sense of Lucy’s identity as a practitioner. Her routine’s spell is broken, and Lucy becomes alive to the possibilities open to her as a Learning Developer *in practice*.

How could Lucy be seen by others when undertaking such an uncertain venture? If she was to succeed against the odds and the group were to engage and benefit significantly from her session, she might be seen by her colleague John as something of a Hero; but then, if she fails, perhaps she will be seen as just that – a failure, or perhaps more generously, a Martyr, who has failed in her endeavour but has done so righteously. The prospect of playing the hero is an incentive to accept the challenge, while the role of Martyr acts as a psychic defence against the potential of failing to succeed. Either way, the expectations – her own, those of her colleague – will be tested in this particular case, with the outcome adding to her understanding of practices more broadly, as they relate

to the practices of others – perhaps as a case study, or less formally as an anecdote, a war story, a complaint against the unreasonable expectations of her academic colleagues; or perhaps an exhortation to fellow Learning Developers to attempt such an enterprise as success is not wholly impossible, thereby extending the very boundaries of possibility for Learning Development. Whatever the outcome, the reflexive act built around this particular case serves to invoke Lucy’s identity as a practitioner of Learning Development, and then, as this identity is performed more publicly in the telling and re-telling of the tale, Lucy’s experience permits her entry into the community of Learning Developers, her part played in the evocation of numerous instances of practice, brought together as a whole, with an accompanying sense of ‘wholeness’, a shared identity as a *type* of practice.

The second normative crisis worth noting can be seen as a counterpoint to the first. Whereas the crisis of expectation is suggestive of the Learning Developer reaching the limits of their capabilities within an arena of desired activities, the corresponding *crisis of legitimacy* pertains to activities undertaken by the Learning Developer which, while within their capabilities, may over-reach or over-step any prior agreement of what their activities ought to be. It is to be expected that the Learning Developer, as an employee of the university, will have a contract of employment and an associated role profile which sets out the institutional expectations of their role. The moment the practitioner exceeds these expectations, then it is plausible that the institution may seek to question why this has occurred. As an example, a Learning Developer may have a remit to engage directly with students to enhance their learning. This remit is codified in their role profile and conditions of employment. If they then decide to start engaging with *academic staff* as well in order to have a positive impact on more students¹⁵ (for example, in the area of assessment design), then the question of legitimacy may arise – should the Learning Developer be exceeding the remit set out by their role profile? They might argue that their work with staff will benefit students and is therefore at least implied by their role profile, but that may not prevent a more strict interpretation being applied by someone who sees the work of that Learning Developer as illegitimate in some way. The key question, then, is one of authorisation and permission, which is to

15 The work with academic staff on the enhancement of teaching practices is one of the distinguishing features of Educational Development, and the saliency of this example is one of the key reasons why Learning Development and Educational Development are increasingly being co-considered – see Rust (2009); Samuels (2013); and Gibbs (2009).

say it is a question of power. The example sketched above pertains to institutional imperatives and formal role profiles, but the crisis of legitimacy and questions of over-reach can also concern the relationship between the Learning Developer and the academic disciplines themselves, as the following account illustrates:

Eleanor missed our last scheduled appointment as her shift at the local hospital over-ran, and for the same reason is finding it difficult to coordinate an appointment with her dissertation supervisor. She arrives at the tutorial office without an appointment “just in case” someone is there to see her. And here I am. Eleanor is confused about how to approach the writing of her research methodology section and presents me with the work she has done to date which, quite frankly, I do find rather muddled and disorganised. We discuss Eleanor’s project and she reveals that she doesn’t really understand enough about the difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods to proceed with her project any further. She has read several books on the module reading list, but still she doesn’t get it. I think I know where she is getting it wrong. It just so happens that I know a great deal about research methodology across a range of disciplines, both from my own research work and through numerous discussions with students and staff. This expertise is not formally recognised in my role, and research methodology is not something that TalSS advertises in terms of what we can support students with.

Momentarily, I mull the possibility of withholding what I know about research methods from Eleanor. After all, the purpose of the tutorial is to work with the student on her academic writing or study skills, not to teach them the so-called ‘content knowledge’ associated with each course of study. However, mindful of the difficulty Eleanor is having in making an appointment with her supervisor, I reason that a brief discussion of research methods will be of benefit to her, and would help her make progress with her writing. In the end, I feel it would be remiss of me not to share what I know with the student in this instance.

There is a moment as we speak where I see that Eleanor has suddenly understood something significant. She nods, she finishes my sentences, she

repeats back to me what I have just told her in her own words, and with an example. “Exactly!”, I say. Eleanor smiles. She is satisfied with our discussion. As she leaves I repeat my advice that she needs to see her supervisor to corroborate what I have told her, but I get the sense that Eleanor feels she has what she needs, and that her agreement to discuss this again with her supervisor is simply politeness. As she leaves I wonder whether what I have discussed with her was appropriate. Is this permitted?

How would her actions be seen by the dissertation supervisor in the Nursing Faculty if he was aware of what Lucy and Eleanor had discussed? He might be pleased, satisfied that another (relative) expert on research methods had been able to move his student along in a situation where he himself was unable to do so. In this case Lucy would be seen as an *agent*, implementing the supervisor’s own pedagogic agenda and improving the working knowledge of his students. But perhaps he would not be pleased, critical of Lucy for over-stepping her role and ‘treading on the toes’ of the lecturing staff in the Nursing Faculty. What does Lucy know of research methods in Nursing? She is not trained or qualified to perform such acts. In this latter case, Lucy is seen as an *interloper*, venturing into territory to which she is not entitled to venture and wearing the garb of another under false pretences. Lucy herself considers both possibilities plausible. She wonders if she ought to inform her contact in the Nursing Faculty of what has taken place, or if it would be better not to make such a disclosure at all for fear of censure. She might turn to the published literature on Learning Development to see if she could find a precedent for the teaching of research methods to students; or she might post something on the JISCMail list server and ask her peer directly. Her awareness of her profession becomes acute at this point as the uncertainty about the legitimacy of her actions gnaws away at her, and she seeks the solace of solidarity, of any validation, that her peers might offer her, and the benefit of any guidance they might proffer. A sense of there being a wider collective understanding of practices could, in this instance, serve to legitimate Lucy’s particular practices.

The first normative crisis presented here represents the Learning Developer reaching the limits of their capabilities and what the expectations of those capabilities are (‘Is this possible?’); the second crisis is evoked when the practitioner extends the limits of which activities are considered legitimate for them to undertake (‘Is this permitted?’). The

third and final normative crisis to be discussed can be characterised as a *crisis of conduct* and arises when the practitioner reflects on whether their actions (or lack of action) are in some way either right or wrong in an ethical or moral sense.

I present the TaLSS paper on student engagement, which outlines the preliminary findings from a pilot study into targeted student support. My misgivings about the project stem from the way the university seeks to categorise students who are 'hard to reach' and 'in need' in terms of their ethnicity and other intrinsic characteristics. While it is indisputable that the data reflects a disparity in terms of engagement with students from certain backgrounds, the reduction of individual students to certain pre-determined categories is troubling. In particular, the isolating of students 'in need' and targeting support directly to them is problematic to me. I can see how it makes sense from a resourcing point of view (targeting scarce resources to where they are most needed), but there is something that unsettles me about how the 'targeting' of categories of 'at risk' students will work in practice when individual students are effectively taken aside and offered additional support purely on the basis of their ethnicity or class background. In addition, there is something of the 'remedial' in this that goes against my deeply-held belief in a self-selecting developmental approach to my work, something of the "you're poor/black/disabled, so here's a special scheme for you" that doesn't seem...right.

The problem is that the university has allocated an important workstream of this project to TaLSS, and there is a feeling in the team that we need to deliver in order to impress the senior management, to prove our worth. As I'm deputising for my line manager Rita, I don't feel that I'm in a position to give voice to my misgivings, at least directly. I compromise (with myself) by making plain (rather than glossing over) the inherent problems with this approach in my otherwise dry and factual account. Most of the participants in the meeting don't raise any particular issues with the scheme, but one rep, Sheila, from the faculty of Health Sciences does, and she is openly critical, pointing out the same problems that I myself can see. In the heat of the moment, I can't help but feel

Sheila is attacking me personally, and I find myself becoming a bit defensive. I walk a fine line between agreeing with her and defending the basis of the project (which, after all, I am presenting to the meeting). I nod at her criticisms, but, feeling the eyes of the meeting upon me, defend the project's basis, even where I see the problems. I find it difficult to articulate my own opposition, and instead find myself on the side of the project's defenders. I feel compelled to go along with the project, in part because I cannot quite put her finger on or articulate what is wrong with it, and in part because the project is important to the standing of my team within the institution.

As the meeting moves on, I continue to turn over the discussion in my mind. I start to feel guilty that I didn't back Sheila up more robustly. I find myself running over justifications for the position I put forward, but my sense of guilt is not assuaged. It occurs to me that perhaps others present felt the same inhibition to speak out against the project, and that makes me feel even more guilty for not raising my own objections. In reflection, I wonder: was this the right thing to have done?

This crisis of conduct brings personal values (sometimes deeply held, at other times only vaguely understood) into conflict with the imperatives of others (the institution in this case), pitting the views of the one (or few) against the many at the local level (in this case, the local space is a Committee room). Similar conflicts may also occur with respect to the values of the disciplines (for example, the culture of deference towards academic staff in the discipline of Pharmacy is something that sits uncomfortably with Lucy's own avowed informality and relationship-building approach with students), and such conflict in value extends beyond the locality of the institution, so this is not simply a matter of institutional power against the powerlessness of the individual, but a more complex extension of power-relations. Lucy's attitude of conformity can be seen as her adopting the role of *collaborator* with a regime with which she is not entirely comfortable with, but which she nevertheless feels powerless to resist, even when a colleague provides an opportunity to do so.

In effect, Lucy's complicity with the power consensus in that meeting room at that particular moment represents a form of *performativity* in the sense developed by Judith Butler (in turn derived from Austin and Derrida), or more precisely, of *metalepsis*, in which 'anticipation conjures its object' (Butler, 1990, p. xv). Lucy chose to collaborate rather than resist, and her collaboration in anticipation of potential censure effectively ensures that the power she posits to exist is actualised in the present moment. In other words, her acquiescence (*collaboration*) to an anticipated force or power is the form by which that force is made manifest. She could have made a principled stand (*resistance*) but chose not to, a decision she can rationalise (not the right time; didn't want to put her line manager off-side; can't really articulate the problem clearly). However, the power is not 'out there' as Lucy supposes, but manifests from her own actions. Perhaps this is what keeps her awake at night?

This crisis of conduct is perpetuated by Lucy's isolation, the very particularity of her own case. In part her decision (which might not have been made by careful, reflective deliberation, but more likely in a reactive, off-the-cuff way) stems from an inability to clearly articulate the problems she has with the 'targeting' of students for intervention. It should be clear, in contrast, that if Lucy had ready access to an understanding of these issues as a broader set of practices shared by others, an articulation or problematisation of the issues at stake might be more readily formulated; and, in having the views of an entire field of practice at her disposal, she may have felt more authority to articulate her objections. This 'broader set of practices', then, could become a centre of gravity, a force in its own right that might be harnessed against other forces at the local level, or more broadly. For example, Lucy might be able to cite a consensus view in the scholarship of teaching and learning that demonstrates empirically that targeting and isolating students with what is effectively remedial support is actually counter-productive from a pedagogic perspective – should such studies exist, and should Lucy have an opportunity to access and assimilate them. However, Lucy rarely has the time or opportunity to make use of research in this way – the pressures of day-to-day work are too pressing, too compelling, and any broader view of the practices of others too distant and indistinct. Lucy is aware of this shortcoming in her practice. Another thing to keep her awake at night.

We have outlined three ‘crises of normativity’, moments when Learning Developers become reflexively aware of their work. ‘Can this be done?’ (a crisis of expectation); ‘Is this permitted?’ (a crisis of legitimacy); ‘Is this the right thing to do?’ (a crisis of conduct). The underlying follow-up question in all three of these instances can be phrased as “...and should I therefore be doing (or attempting to do) this? Or should I be doing something else?”. It is this implied follow-up question that renders these various crises ‘normative’ in nature, which is to say that they are all implicitly concerned with what actions and behaviours of a professional nature might be considered usual, normal or expected under the circumstances.

In each of these moments of reflexive self-awareness, the Learning Developer can be seen to navigate a range of potential roles pertaining to each crisis, roles which act as opposing polarities. In a crisis of expectation, the practitioner might be seen as a Hero or a Martyr; in a crisis of legitimacy an Agent or an Interloper; in a crisis of conduct, a Collaborator, or part of the Resistance. As polarities, these roles should not be viewed as strict categories type-casting the way Learning Developers are seen, or see themselves, but extreme expressions of fleeting parts played by Learning Developers. The binaries Hero/Martyr; Agent/Interloper; Collaborator/Resistance can act as useful heuristics for considering the varying roles that practitioners play,¹⁶ but should not be seen as constraining the potential of Learning Development into six fixed categories.

This point is not made in passing; rather, it highlights one of the fundamental problems inherent in conceptualising a field of practice like Learning Development, and that is the tendency to wish to define and characterise that field of practice with clearly demarcated boundaries, boundaries that will hold the concept firm and fast, enabling both clarity of understanding and ease of communication. This is not simply something

16 In much the same way Bishop and Finnigan (2009) make use of metaphors to characterise aspects of, and approaches to, Learning Development. Their aim was to ‘develop a sharper, more refined perspective on the work we do with students and staff across the various institutions we work in’. A variety of different metaphorical constructs are presented, some developed from workshops conducted with fellow Learning Developers. As such, their work represents a kind of ‘broader understanding of Learning Development that sets out features of practices that may be shared by a multitude of practitioners. The authors make no claims that the metaphors they present are in any way definitive or categorical, only that they represent ways of conceptualising Learning Development, a view I share. However, the purpose of the present thesis is not to ‘develop a sharper, more refined perspective’ on Learning Development or Learning Development. On the contrary, the aim of the present thesis is to dissolve and degrade the edges of Learning Development in order to approach it afresh, as will become clear.

that we might wish to do in making a study of Learning Development – it is an enticing flame that practitioners themselves can be drawn into during moments of crisis.

Chapter 4: From the Particular Case to an Aggregate View of practice

I remember when I was doing my Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education I talked with colleagues from across the university about how students learn and the assumptions that underpin that learning. There was a strong sense from the instructors of the course that certain approaches and ways of looking at learning were ‘approved’. I guess you need to have that when you put together a curriculum – things deemed worth teaching, I suppose. So what I remember is that there was a strong consensus around constructivism, and in particular ‘constructive alignment’: the idea of learning outcomes, and making learning objectives explicit and clear¹⁷. My colleagues found that idea difficult to argue with. It seemed intuitively right. Then there was a lot of stuff around social learning and communities of practice¹⁸¹⁹. And Vygotsky. I remember his work – the idea of pushing students out of their comfort zone, but not too far²⁰. All this stuff seemed to make sense, really. A lot of it spoke to what we already understood ourselves as doing. I don’t know that a lot of us were particularly challenged by any of it. I remember at the time people found it a bit boring, really. I suppose it’s the same when I go to professional conferences for Learning Developers. The same kinds of assumptions around the ‘learner constructs their own learning’ and of the inherent social nature of learning that everyone just seems to accept without question. I suppose I accept all that stuff too, it underpins my own practices.

A Learning Developer like Lucy comes to understand their practices in terms of activities and routines, that is to say, she doesn’t really think about them at all. On occasion, those routines are disrupted and Lucy becomes reflexively aware that her practices do not operate simply at the local level, but in a ‘field’ of such practices, in

¹⁷ Biggs and Tang (2007)

¹⁸ Wenger (1998)

¹⁹ Bandura (1977)

²⁰ Vygotsky (1978)

ways that operate non-locally. Her own particular practices can then come to be seen to be one such expression of something wider.

The discussion of Learning Development and Educational Development in the introduction presented features of each field of practice drawn from that segment of the published literature which has adopted a self-reflexive position. In so doing, we get a sense of what authors in each field might see as the defining attributes that set either Learning Development or Educational Development apart from other professional or academic domains within higher education. Each selection presented can therefore be viewed as a particular perspective on Learning Development or Educational Development. In order to bind the orbits of these fields together, the differences and commonalities between Learning Development and Educational Development as presented in each selection were then highlighted in order to characterise them as ‘distinctive but inter-related’. The question that needs to be addressed at this point is this: can such a characterisation of either Learning Development, Educational Development or, indeed, of Learning Development be understood to be *definitive*?

There are a number of positions that one might adopt in order to approach such a question. The first is that each selection from the literature is just that – a selection. That is to say, each quotation represents a portion of text from a published academic paper or book chapter that characterises its subject in a particular way, and that the text in each case has been deliberately chosen on account of this representation. In this view, each quotation presented as ‘evidence’ of a feature or position that in some way represents Learning Development or Educational Development can be seen as somewhat limited in terms of its capacity to represent on account of its being chosen. The difficulty lies in the act of choice: to be singled out as a faithful representation of Learning Development/Educational Development presupposes the existence, *a priori*, of an attribute of Learning Development/Educational Development that constitutes in some way its true nature. Put another way, the difficulty is not so much the choice as the act of representation itself. To take but one example, Gosling states that one of Educational Development’s two key functions is staff development. This claim is based on a 2000 survey of Educational Developers and was published in a 2008 report on the state of Educational Development in the UK (Gosling, 2008). Gosling thus represents Educational Development in a particular way, based on his analysis of an empirical

observation. That representation is reproduced here in order to characterise Educational Development in a particular way. But there was nothing to oblige its reproduction here – it was a choice on the part of the present author. A different text could have been chosen, representing Educational Development in an entirely different way.

We may then turn to an examination of the quality of the selections themselves. Can the texts selected be considered accurate representations of Learning Development and Educational Development? Our concern here is in the act of selection itself, and, in particular, the judgement of the selector. Could other texts about Learning Development or Educational Development have been selected instead of those presented? Would these alternative selections have better represented these fields of practice? Intertwined with these concerns around selection are the selector's rationale for making such choices, expressed through their analysis. How convinced are we as a reader of their argument? As a reader, we must make a judgement of the author's judgement. But who is right, and on what basis?

One possible basis for such a judgement lies in what might be termed 'the weight of the evidence'. In an attempt to characterise two related fields of practice in Learning Development, a selection of texts are presented which purport to represent particular features. We may go as far as to say that these features are intended to be defining features, for in seeking to characterise Learning Development we wish to distinguish it from other entities, such as other, similar fields of practice (learning technologists, for example). The character of Learning Development, in this view, can be seen as that which is distinctive about it. The selected texts can therefore variously purport to present representative features, defining features or distinctive features of Learning Development. The extent to which these terms are synonymous is subordinate to the fact that certain features are somehow representative of Learning Development.

In order to determine whether such a characterisation is accurate, the reader must draw first upon their own knowledge in order to verify the veracity of these claims to representation, and then, if that is insufficient to provide the basis for a judgement, to then draw upon the knowledge of others. This process can be viewed as an ever-widening series of ripples in a pool. From the stone's-throw of perception and the initial splash of individual reflection and judgement, the ripples move outward to meet the

perceptions, reflections and judgements of others, as written and published in professional and academic journals. Thus, the so-called ‘weight of evidence’ can be seen as an accumulation of the number of other views consulted, an amassing of perception, reflection and judgement that one adds to one’s own individual view. Alongside the quantity of other perspectives, there is likewise a qualitative accumulation in the form of consensus or agreement that these views represent. The more consensus one finds, the less need there is to ripple outwards from the centre of one’s own perception.

To illustrate this point, let us once again take Gosling’s claim that one of the two key roles of Educational Developers is to engage in staff development. When Lucy reads that perspective, she will judge whether or not it accords with her own view. If it does, she will view Gosling’s claim as a verification of her own perspective. This alone may satisfy her that staff development is indeed a key area of activity for Educational Developers as it confirms her existing viewpoint. If it does not accord with her view – let us say that she doesn’t view staff development as an appropriate activity for an Educational Developer, or that Educational Development should be considered entirely differently to Learning Development, then she will take issue with Gosling and perhaps seek to refute his position, by critiquing the basis for the claim, or on some other basis. In seeking to refute it, she may seek an alternative view, a third perspective, and thus the ripples move outward. The more perspectives she finds that chime with one another, the more she will begin to perceive the ‘weight of evidence’. If the evidence confirms her own perspective, then perhaps she will ease off in her efforts to find more of it – her view being confirmed once, perhaps twice, and then a third time in succession will satisfy her that her initial view was correct. If, on the other hand, her own perspective is challenged, she may cease to look for other views for fear of having her own perspective eviscerated; or, she may seek further, alternative evidence that affirms her perspective. If she continues to find that her perspective is not shared by others, she can either change her mind, convinced by the weight of evidence to the contrary, or she can continue to hold her view in spite of (or perhaps because of) its apparent contrariness.

To summarise, Lucy may well be satisfied with her own perceptions and subsequent reflections of an instance of her practice. Her perspective is her own, and she sees no need to have it confirmed or refuted by the perspectives of others. Let us call this

singular, individual perspective on some event or other the ‘Particular Case’. If she is unsatisfied that her own perspective and subsequent reflection and judgement is correct, she may then seek the views of others. How far out from her own perspectives she is prepared to go depends on her willingness to engage with contrary views, or the degree to which she is satisfied that her views are confirmed. She might even consider applying some kind of method to assess the degree to which the available evidence represents a consensus view in the form of statistical analysis, meta-analysis, systematic review. We have referred to such a perspective already, variously as a ‘broader set of practices’; ‘types’ of practices; practices ‘shared with others’; or ‘common themes and features’. Let us call this engagement with multiple views and perspectives the ‘Aggregate View’, regardless of the degree to which any engagement with such views might be considered either casual or rigorous²¹.

Returning to Learning Development, the aim of presenting a number of accounts of what these fields of practice consist of was to present the reader with a sufficiency of perspectives on these fields of practice in order that the reader may characterise them *as* fields of practice; in this way, the reader would be able to come to a clearer understanding of what the present study is actually examining (“...what exactly is Learning Development?”). This extended discussion of perspective – the Particular Case, the Aggregate View – might appear to have diverted us from the path of understanding after a few short steps, but this apparent diversion is crucial to obtain an understanding of the purpose of the present study.

In practice, an individual Learning Developer adopts a perspective on their work. Their view represents a Particular Case of Learning Development. Their understanding is their own. In the example presented, Lucy’s perspective is one such Particular Case. When Lucy extends her consideration of her work beyond the immediate confines of her own individual practices and interpretations, she begins to construct an Aggregate View of Learning Development. This may encompass reading the literature on Learning Development, comparing her own practices with those of her fellow Learning Developers, or sharing her perspectives with other academics, managers, or administrators and obtaining their views and interpretations of the work she is (or

21 In other words, to infer meaning from a number of supporting cases: how many supporting cases are required to satisfy us that our inference is correct?

should be) doing. Taken in this way, there are potentially an infinite number of Aggregate Views of Learning Development depending on the combination of different elements – Lucy reads an academic paper, an article in the professional literature, a blog post...; Lucy discusses her practices with one fellow practitioner, with two, with three...; Lucy outlines her work to a lecturer in Pharmacy, an HR administrator, the Dean of Humanities... Each potential aggregate is different, and thus each potential Aggregate View of Learning Development is different.

This is important in the way it impacts on Learning Development in practice. Any given practice setting consists, in the first instance, of a Particular Case of Learning Development, the individual perspective of a single practitioner. This individual has an image of Learning Development, a representation of what it is, what it is for, what it does, and so on. They will also have judgements of value relating to these elements (“Why do these things?”; “For what purpose?”; “To what end?”) Rippling out from the individual’s Particular Case, these perspectives will join with other representations of Learning Development in the form of published literature, conversations with colleagues, off-hand comments from university administrators and so on. This joining of perspectives forms an Aggregate View which is itself one of many possible or potential aggregate views depending on the component parts of the aggregate, with the individual’s perspective on whatever components it happens to consist of at the centre. This perspective may shift and change in response to the aggregate, which may expand or contract in response to the individual’s acceptance or rejection of the other components comprising the given aggregate. The practice setting in this view is dynamic and fluid with respect to the representation of Learning Development as a distinct entity within that setting, with the representation formed responding to the manner in which that individual practitioner has composed the aggregate within which their particular perspective resides.

We have not yet used the term ‘identity’ to characterise any given representation of Learning Development, but that is effectively what we are talking about here. The Learning Developer in effect composes a representation of Learning Development based on their own perspective (their distinctive Particular Case) and the way that perspective intersects with its surroundings (writing, voices) to form an Aggregate View (or representation) of Learning Development in which they themselves (their Particular

Case) is implicated. An identity is formed for the practitioner on the basis of these interactions, and it is an identity that, in the first instance, resides in (or looks out from) the expression of a Particular Case of Learning Development. This Particular Case is then shaped (formed, deformed, reformed) in response to the composed (recomposed, decomposed) aggregate. The key point to consider in this characterisation of the 'identity' of Learning Development is its inherently perspectival and unstable nature.

Chapter 5: From an Aggregate View to a Universal Picture of practice

After I'd done my Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education, we were encouraged to join the Higher Education Academy, the HEA. Encouraged isn't quite the right word – we sort of had to do it – part of the university's response to the 'Teaching Education Framework', the TEF. Apparently, the more teaching staff are HEA fellows, the better the TEF score, and the better the league table ranking. That means the university is more marketable to students, or so it is said, so we were all expected to do our bit. As part of this we had to reflect on our teaching practices and match them to a set of criteria, putting together a PowerPoint presentation with three case studies that corresponded to certain activities, knowledge and values - the 'professional standard's framework'. What bugged me about doing this was the way my teaching had to be reduced to a pre-determined set of criteria in order to 'pass'. It wasn't difficult, really. But it reduced the complexity of teaching to just a few pre-set 'ideal' teaching practices that were so generalised as to seem a bit meaningless. It's like everything that is supposed to represent 'good' teaching had been distilled by committee into a set of criteria, a set of boxes to tick in order to demonstrate that you, too, were a good teacher.

At around the same time someone sent me an article about teaching and learning which included a commentary on the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. I must admit, that kind of abstract theorising usually leaves me cold. I can't remember who wrote the article²², but I found it quite accessible as it referred to T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* and to Donna Tartt's *The Secret History*, both of which I have read and like very much. There can be some really heavy and difficult concepts in this kind of philosophy, so being able to relate it to what I know and understand was useful to me.

²² It was Ian Munday's *Roots and Rhizomes: Some reflections on contemporary pedagogy* (Munday, 2012).

What stuck with me about that article was the idea of 'over-determination', and that in pedagogy there can be an attempt to control the complexity of teaching and learning by imposing structures on it. I guess this resonated with me at the time I was preparing my HEA submission, where the criteria, the 'framework' seemed to represent some kind of attempt to tame the complexity of teaching and reduce it to something that can be formulated and understood by everyone. A kind of 'essence' of teaching practices, I guess. Like a perfume we can all wear so we all smell the same, comforting and familiar.

The preceding chapters, in presenting the practices of Lucy and situating her own reflexive understanding of those practices, have been attempting to demonstrate the difficulties faced when trying to answer a seemingly routine question: "What is Learning Development?". Such is the depth of our Platonic heritage that it becomes difficult to think otherwise by way of proceeding. However, as seemingly intuitive and uncontroversial as this question appears, it is based on a deeply problematic premise. As Deleuze points out in his 1967 lecture, *'The method of dramatisation'*:

The question What is? prejudices the Idea as the simplicity of essence; it then becomes obligatory that the simple essence comprehends the inessential, and comprehends it in essence, thus contradicting itself. (Deleuze, 1967).

In other words, Deleuze is arguing that when we ask the question 'what is' in relation to something or other, we are seeking to understand the *essence* of that thing ("this is what it is"). We then somehow expect that 'essence' to permit us to understand *everything important* about that thing – even, he suggests, its 'inessential' features. Deleuze points out that to expect an 'essence' to convey the 'inessential' is contradictory. Deleuze then goes on to outline another approach to understanding something, what he refers to as 'the method of dramatization'. The present thesis represents an attempt to follow this 'method of dramatisation' as an alternative way of approaching the question "What is..." in relation to Learning Development. It seeks to resist the urge to think of Learning Development practices in terms of a 'type' while accepting that there is in fact a 'field' of such practices.

This first part of the thesis has charted the movement from an idea of a Particular Case of practice which, although governed by a formal understanding at the local level, is open to interpretation in terms of what it actually constitutes. It then outlined how a practitioner such as Lucy may come to absorb or forget any formal understanding of her practices as they become ‘normal’ – ordinary and routine. Such routinised practices can be disrupted, at which point the practitioner may seek to move beyond an understanding of their particular practices in favour of a broader understanding beyond the local setting. The extended discussion in chapter 3 focused on three so-called ‘normative crises’ which precipitate the practitioner’s invocation of professional identity as Learning and/or Educational Developers. We have seen that in each of these moments of crisis, the limitations of the practitioner’s Particular Case can be addressed or augmented by appealing to a broader Aggregate View, a bringing together of a range of Particular Cases in order to formulate a broader field of practice *qua* field of practice, which is to say a collective entity with a definable identity recognisable as such by its practitioners.²³ Such a ‘collective’ view of practices may indeed inform the individual’s Particular Case at any given moment, not just in moments of disruption or crisis; however it is the conscious invocation of the Aggregate that I wish to draw attention to here. I have argued that a recourse to (that is to say, a conscious evocation of) the Aggregate View of practice occurs primarily when there is a disruption to the routine that typically constitutes any given instance of a Particular Case of practice, as in the examples involving Lucy. Such disruptions to routinised practice (‘crises’) occur when these routine practices are confronted or challenged in some way, and I have outlined what I consider to be the three most important instances of crisis, relating to expectations, legitimacy and (ethical) conduct.

In chapter 4 I pointed out that any given Aggregate View represents a provisional construct of Learning Development based on which particulars are being aggregated, by whom, and to what purpose or end. If the aim of such aggregation is to seek *authorisation* for a particular practice, then we can see that this is problematic: as each aggregate is effectively unique, in an important way it is no better than the Particular

23 I am here using the term ‘aggregate’ as understood by Leibniz, detailed and interpreted by Lodge (2001):

“Leibniz seems to be talking about a process that involves at least two distinct mental acts, or at least two different components in the single act of aggregating. First, there is the perception of a number of things as standing in certain relations, and second, an act of ‘invention’, through which the perceiver comes to treat the relations as the basis for an aggregated entity (Lodge, 2001, p. 475)

Case that the practitioner seeks to replace. The evidence that I assemble to characterise Learning Development in a way that authorises or legitimates my own practice might be different (or interpreted differently) to the evidence that you assemble to de-authorise or de-legitimate it. We may seek the Aggregate View in order to provide a stable basis for our actions – a stabilising process in response to a destabilising crisis – but the Aggregate View is in itself perspectival, depending on how it has been constructed. A single text. Two texts. Multiple texts....at which point are we satisfied of the veracity of the claim? One reason, two reasons, three...at what point are we to be satisfied with the argument as presented? We have made no progress, in other words; when we have constructed our Aggregate View all we have is *our* Aggregate View – that is, a *Particular* Aggregate View. We cannot escape from the play of forces. While our Particular Case might seem weak, in seeking authorisation in the Aggregate View we remain continually obliged to continue to build upon it, to widen and strengthen it. We may bring to bear our own ‘weight of evidence’ to authorise our actions, but we must continually contend with an even weightier aggregation. Planets may collide. Perhaps even more seriously for the Aggregate View, the very basis on which the aggregation is founded might be dismissed out of hand as illegitimate. In the face of more powerful forces, our own constructions may simply crumble.

In addition to the Particular Case and the Aggregate View, a third possibility is conceivable. Where the Particular Case represents a singular, individual perspective and the Aggregate View represents an accumulation of Particular Cases to form a composite picture, the third possibility involves perceiving a thing or an event from an infinite number of perspectives, an aggregate-of-all-aggregates. This is the ‘Universal Picture’, the view from everywhere. It is from this perspective-of-all-perspectives that we might finally determine the essential features of a given thing or event, the very Truth of the matter. Such a view would be very appealing indeed, for it would be a view without limits.

There is a resonance in this idea with the insights provided by Merleau-Ponty in relation to visual perception. In a crucial passage of *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty makes the following observation:

To see is to enter a universe of beings which *display themselves*, and they would not do this if they could not be hidden behind each other or behind me. In other words: to look at an object is to inhabit it, and from this habitation to grasp all things in terms of the aspect which they present to it. But in so far as I see those things too, they remain abodes open to my gaze, and, being potentially lodged in them, I already perceive from various angles the central object of my present vision. Thus every object is the mirror of all others. When I look at the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not only the qualities visible from where I am, but also those which the chimney, the walls, the table can ‘see’; but back of my lamp is nothing but the face which it ‘shows’ to the chimney. I can therefore see an object in so far as objects form a system or a world, and in so far as each one treats the others round it as spectators of its hidden aspects and as guarantee of the permanence of those aspects. Any seeing of an object by me is instantaneously reiterated among all those objects in the world which are apprehended as co-existent, because each of them is all that the others ‘see’ of it. Our previous formula must therefore be modified; the house itself is not the house seen from nowhere, but the house seen from everywhere. The completed object is translucent, being shot through from all sides by an infinite number of present scrutinies which intersect in its depths leaving nothing hidden (Merleau-Ponty, 2015, p. 73)

Our perception of a field of practice like Learning Development is not a visual perception of a material object like a lamp or a house, but rather a non-material conception or idea of a set of features that pertain to certain identifiable practices grouped together as a coherent entity. Nevertheless, it can be argued that our understanding of how we *conceive* of something abstract and immaterial is influenced by our understanding of how we *perceive* something concrete and material. Indeed, the inescapable interconnectedness of perception and thought is one of the abiding themes of the *Phenomenology of Perception*. If we accept that perception of the material and conception of the immaterial share a common mechanism, we can see how the very notion of an ‘aggregate of aggregates’ creates a sort of ‘translucency’ whereby something abstract like a field of practice is ‘shot through’ with an anticipated ‘infinite number of present scrutinies’. Within this anticipated infinity resides the essence of the thing – lamp, house, Learning Development.

Faced with the failure of the Aggregate View to fully authorise our actions and to stabilise our practices in the face of crisis, the appeal of the Universal Picture becomes all the more clear. The potential for presenting the weight of evidence *entirely objectively*, irrefutably, is seductive. We may therefore view the Particular, Aggregate and Universal in quantitative terms as the One, the Many and the Infinite. While the Many will always out-number and dominate the One, nothing can out-number the Infinite. This is the appeal, once more of the *definitive*, of the *type*, a conceptualisation of Learning Development as consisting of a stable class of objects that needs only to be defined and documented. As discussed earlier in this chapter, however, this seductive position can lead us to close off what might otherwise be open to us.

Part Two: Aspects of Learning Development

Practice

Chapter 6: Routinised Practice

One day my colleague Paul asked me: “What have you been up to this morning?” and I had to think for a moment. “Tutorials”, I replied. “Anything interesting?”, he asked. Again, I had to think about it. “Oh, not much. Just essay writing, being critical, a literature review. The usual”. Paul went back to what he was doing, but I kept thinking about my morning. It occurred to me then that until Paul had asked me, I hadn’t really reflected on what I’d been doing for the past two hours. My thoughts were already moving on to what I was going to be doing that afternoon, planning ahead. The tutorials had been fairly routine for me, it’s true. But as I reflected further I realised that they didn’t quite seem so ‘routine’ at the time. There was no sense of my “going through the motions” with the students; on the contrary, thinking back I had been totally absorbed in their particular issues, in their worlds. Part of what I enjoy about one-to-one tutorials is the quick thinking required, the responsiveness that these intimate exchanges require. Although I can often slot what they are doing or what they need into a particular area of my own expertise, and can ‘pull out’ some key concepts, practices or advice from my own stock of knowledge, there is always a sense of being in the moment with that particular student – watching their expressions, their body language, to see if what I am offering them is having any resonance at all, adjusting and calibrating all the time. I might turn to the same examples, the same phrasing, or draw a diagram that I’ve drawn before, but it will always be subtly different each time, and always seemingly off-the-cuff, not scripted – unique, like a snowflake. Tutorials are never boring, because there is no true repetition, it’s always different. But even while they are different every time, tutorials can still seem ‘the same’ in the sense that there’s no lingering over them, no cause to reflect on what has been said or done in the session. These unique moments are soon forgotten.

Much of what Lucy does in her work as a Learning Developer is unremarkable to her. As we have discussed in the first chapter, Lucy's awareness of her being a *practitioner* of Learning Development tends to occur when the circumstances of her work cease to be ordinary and instead present themselves as somehow being problematic, situations I have referred to as 'crises of normativity'. It is this periodic encounter with problems in her work that, in effect, generate her sensibility as a practitioner, her identity as a Learning Developer. When she knows that something is possible, when she knows that a particular activity is permitted, when she feels that what she is doing is the right thing to do, then she continues with her practice, immersed in her interactions with others – with academic colleagues, with learners, with representatives of the institutional management and administration. Her identification with her 'profession' or 'field of practice' (or however else she conceives of Learning Development) is fleeting and ephemeral, evoked and dismissed just as quickly. She does not have to think about it. She simply does what she does; her working world is one of activity, of action.

This state of affairs, this equilibrium, has been characterised as Lucy's 'routinised practice'. This is practice as ritualised, rote, automatic, habitual, unreflective, unconscious. It is not uncommon to view this mode of action in somewhat negative or pejorative terms.²⁴ For example, in discussions of threshold concepts²⁵, 'ritualised' or routine practices are cast as the shackles which are broken when disrupted by 'troublesome knowledge' and new ways of thinking (see Walker (2013, p. 248); Scheja and Pettersson (2010, p. 223). Ronald Bogue, in a discussion of Deleuze's work on Proust and Signs (Bogue in Semetsky, 2008, pp. 2-3) points out Deleuze's own reading of Proust similarly views the interpretation of signs as requiring the overcoming of 'habitual modes of comprehending reality' or 'stock notions':

Only through a chance encounter with an unsettling sign can thought be jolted from its routine patterns, and only through such an encounter will the object of thought cease to be arbitrarily selected and attain the necessity of something that

24 In addition to the examples set out here, there is an extensive literature on routinised practices within the disciplines of sociology and management theory. Structuration theory, notably the work of Giddens and Goffman present perhaps the closest corollary to the way I am using the term here. See for example Mutch (2006); Stirk (1999); Trowler (2001); and Kakavelakis, (2010)

25 An important current within the contemporary scholarship of teaching and learning which will be examined in greater depth in chapter 6

itself chooses thought, that constrains thought and sets it in motion (Bogue in Semetsky, 2008, p. 3).

Routine and habit, then, are seen as something to be ‘overcome’ in order to be free of constraints on thinking. Bogue’s discussion outlines Deleuze’s view of learning in these very terms:

By “learning” Deleuze clearly does not mean the mere acquisition of any new skill or bit of information, but instead the accession to a new way of perceiving and understanding the world (Bogue in Semetsky, 2008, p. 3).

In order to learn, we need to break out of our unreflective routines: we need to be unsettled, disrupted, awakened.²⁶ However, if we return to Lucy once more, we can see that her attitude to such disruptions are at best ambivalent. As a practitioner, it is doubtful that Lucy would view her work as ever being ‘settled’ – she remains alive to the dynamism inherent in human relations, and, if offered a simple choice would surely welcome ‘new ways of thinking’ over ‘the same as it ever was’. Nevertheless, it will be clear from her responses to the so-called ‘normative crises’ that these experiences in her working life are clearly ‘unsettling’ to her. In spite of the fact that these crises may eventually result in Lucy learning something (about herself, about her work) and developing her practices, they remain *crises*, and Lucy does not necessarily relish them as opportunities to grow and develop. Instead, she views them as ‘problems’, and seeks to *resolve* them in order to return to the undisturbed state characterised by her ‘routinised practice’. We can see that by confronting each crisis as it arises in the way that we have outlined above, Lucy may arrive at ‘a new way of perceiving and understanding the world’; but it remains the case that this new way eventually becomes subsumed into a new routine, a new pattern of behaviour. That new routine may in turn itself be disrupted when a new crisis arises, only for its resolution to lead Lucy back once more into a further routine, and on it goes.

26 Such a conception of learning brings it closer to the ‘gnosis’ of Gnosticism than the ‘skills agenda’ routinely discussed by contemporary scholars of teaching and learning. For the Learning Developer, the significance of this is that such a sense may reinforce the notion that they possess the capacity to liberate the student in some way from a state of ignorance; that is, their work is not seen simply as an impersonal institutional response to the needs of students to progress within the assessment regime.

If we are striving to learn, to break out of our habits of thought and established patterns of action, what then underpins this desire on the part of the practitioner to perpetually seek to return to the routine? Why not, instead, actively seek out crisis in order to break out of the habit of routine and reach our potential for learning and self-development? Should the practitioner not be constantly alive to change and adaptation? Paul Harrison's reading of Deleuze's work with Felix Guattari sheds some light on this seeming conundrum. Far from being seen entirely as an impediment to enlightened thinking and action, the repetition of routine and habit has a stabilising effect:

Habits are an *enframing* which protect the flesh from the virtual and filter out the 'background noise' (Harrison, 2000, p. 505). Emphasis in the original)

Here, Harrison's reading of Deleuze and Guattari views habits as patterns of behaviour and action which protect an organism's sense of themselves as an integrated individual. Habits build up in an individual as layers of 'strata' and help define their sense of self, their uniqueness. Without this habitual 'enframing', the individual, is prone to 'destratification', a coming apart, wherein what is distinct and distinguishable about them (their habits) unravels:

The strata of the body form the enunciative 'frame' of the organism: they define what it is possible to see and to say (Deleuze, 1988). The contraction of habits gradually reduces the potential, or virtuality, of the body to do things otherwise (Harrison, 2000, p. 506).

What Harrison refers to here, using terminology developed by Deleuze and Guattari, is the way habitual activity serves to permit the 'body' of the 'organism'²⁷ a form of cohesion. Without this cohesion, the individual can 'fall apart', lose their integrity. The corollary of this formulation is that habitual activity enables the individual organism to create and maintain a sense of integrity and cohesion. Indeed, Somers-Hall suggests that Deleuze goes so far as to say that habits form the very basis of our subjectivity:

27 Deliberately broad terms – in the case of Lucy this of course refers to a human individual, but the idea is that these ideas can also apply to other kinds of bodies, and other kinds of organisms.

What is the nature of the subject that is constituted through this contraction of habit? Well, the subject is simply the organisation of impressions themselves. It is thus constituted by a synthesis, rather than being the agent of synthesis. Habit is thus not being understood here as a form of activity on the part of the subject, but rather as a mode of expectation, or in Deleuze's terms, contemplation. Now, it is this contemplation of time as involving anticipations and retentions that Deleuze claims is the subject (Somers-Hall, 2013a, p. 64).

Contraction here for Deleuze (following his reading of Hume) is the process whereby the repetition of some phenomena is anticipated (that is, expected; Deleuze's term is 'contemplated') by the individual organism. For Deleuze, this process of contracting habits and the organising of associated (perceptual) impressions is what generates subjectivity itself. The subject is not the agent of this process; rather, the process itself gives rise to the subject as it anticipates and retains certain perceptual experiences. This is not achieved through *reasoned* contemplation, but rather through the expectation of a repetition based on experience – habit. Habits do not form through higher reasoning (that is, through reflection) but through the anticipation of patterns of experiences due to their repetition through time.

The example Deleuze draws on in *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze, 2004) is Hume's own, the sequence: AB, AB, AB, AB, AB, A... In this pattern, we come to expect that the next letter in the sequence will be B. Yet this expectation is not due to the intrinsic qualities of either A or B, the qualities of which remain unchanged, but rather because the repetition of the pattern has caused us to have *contracted* A and B together to generalise a new qualitative whole, AB. When we apprehend A, we complete it with B – and we do so *habitually*, without reflecting upon it. Deleuze refers to this phenomenon as *passive synthesis*, and it provides the basis for his understanding of temporality, which we will take up at a later point.

For our present purposes it is enough to point out that, at a different scale of complexity, it is passive synthesis which governs Lucy's actions as a practitioner. Having undertaken a form of activity in the past (for example, lecturing to a group of Pharmacy students), she anticipates (we might more accurately say that she *expects*, as this is not a function of conscious thinking) its repetition in the future. Lucy contracts together all

the elements which make up this activity to produce a generalised whole – her expectation or anticipation of what will occur. Such an anticipation is not consciously reflected upon, but habitual and habituated. If, for whatever reason, this expectation is not fulfilled, Lucy experiences this as ‘crisis’: B has not followed A. For Lucy, things are not as they have been anticipated, and she must now attempt to formulate a new pattern with the new information. The consequences of not doing so are significant. To return to Harrison’s image of the habitual, enunciative ‘frame’ of the organism, what happens to Lucy in the event of one of these normative crises is a form of ‘de-stratification’, where the performance or announcement of that habitual self is prevented, precipitating a breaking down of Lucy’s subjectivity as a practitioner. If she wishes to maintain her professional integrity, she must seek to contract what she now contemplates, which is to say, to form a new pattern (habit) that will serve the purpose of enabling her to anticipate or expect what will occur when that pattern recurs in the future.²⁸

Such maintenance of integrity implies the expenditure of energy, and it follows that to be continually in such a position would be an exhausting proposition for Lucy:

‘...fatigue is a real component of contemplation. It is correctly said that those who do nothing tire themselves most. Fatigue marks the point at which the soul can no longer contract what it contemplates, the moment at which contraction and contemplation come apart’ (Deleuze, 2004, p. 98)

For Lucy, her habituated capacity to anticipate what will happen as her practice of Learning Development unfolds is integral to her capacity to undertake such a practice. The more often this anticipation is thwarted – ‘the point at which the soul can no longer contract what it contemplates’ – the more incompatible Lucy’s practice becomes with her own sense of what she is doing, her professional identity; the frame collapses, and Lucy cannot continue to consider herself a practitioner as such.

²⁸ This is not to suggest that habitual practices should always be viewed in a positive light. The notion that habitual activity can represent the moribund repetition of established routines, devoid of life and vitality, still stands. What I am arguing here is that this need not always be seen to be the case, and that habit and routine can be of benefit to the practitioner. Indeed, the two conditions (moribund, lacking in vitality on the one hand; comfortable and psychologically sustainable on the other) can be seen to co-exist.

So habit and routine, in this reading, become positive attributes. Harrison goes on to make the further point that as these habitual strata build up, they then serve to constrain the possibilities open to an individual – their potential or ‘virtuality’²⁹. Herein lies the more negative understanding of habit and routine, but it is clear from this reading that some form of habitual, routinised practice has a positive impact on the practitioner: too much crisis, too much instability, and the practitioner is continually drained of energy. If this becomes too much, if the practitioner is unable to remain energised, all sense of cohesion and integrity drains away. Thus, we cling to our routine and seek to return to it, and we protect ourselves against any disruption to it, lest that disruption break down all sense of cohesion entirely.

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze outlines Nietzsche’s image of the dice throw as a way of exploring the idea of ‘virtuality’ that Harrison alludes to above and forms a key concept for Deleuze throughout his work (Deleuze, 1986b). In this image, the moment at which the dice are thrown, when they are in the air and the result of their falling is yet to be determined, this moment is for us one of absolute absorption. We are unaware of anything but the tumbling dice, intent on what numbers might come up when they finally come to rest. At this point in time, mid-tumble, the numbers that will show when the dice land are undetermined. The possibilities are limited by the number of dice and the number of sides, but the outcome remains an unknown. Deleuze uses this image of Nietzsche (from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) to illustrate a concept that he draws from Bergson. The undetermined nature of the numbers the dice will show upon landing – the *actual* value of the dice throw – are seen to be a ‘virtual’ quality of the dice at this point in time while they are still in the air. Although limited in terms of the number of potential permutations, *all* potential permutations are seen to be equally possible and therefore equally real. This is a ‘virtual’ reality, but reality nonetheless. Our apprehension of the tumbling dice in this virtual state is entirely absorbed, immersed in the possibilities the situation holds.

29 The term virtual has a particular set of meanings and associations in the philosophy of Deleuze. While this will be expanded upon at length below in the chapters which follow, the quote from Proust that Deleuze cites is probably the clearest expression of the concept. When referring to the ‘virtuality’ of memory, Proust characterises it as ‘real but not actual, ideal but not abstract’. The concept is crucial in Deleuze’s realism as it permits consideration of the reality of phenomena which do not have a concrete material expression without recourse to a form of transcendental idealism – that is, that there is some abstract realm beyond our own from which our material world somehow emanates. For Deleuze, our material world alone is sufficient, and contains within it the means to change and evolve through the interplay of the actual and the virtual.

The virtual state of the dice is not permanent. When they land and we can see their faces, we will know what numbers have been thrown. The indeterminate, virtual state in which the dice were previously will end and the determined, outcome of the dice throw will be known. This state of the dice as thrown is real, too, but it can also be said to be *actual*. At this point the nature of our engagement with the dice changes from one of absorption, of total immersion in the moment, to one of ‘distanced contemplation’ (Bogue, 1989). We see the numbers as they have fallen, and can now reflect on the implications of the actual outcome. This permits us to separate ourselves from the dice as we are no longer absorbed in the indeterminacy of the throw itself. In Deleuze’s account, reality itself consists of a continual interplay between the indeterminate possibilities of the virtual aspects of reality, and the determined actualities that we experience.

The ‘enframing’ of bodies through habituated routines, represents a process of actualisation, whereby the actions actually undertaken are returned to over and over again; the building up of habituated action (of routine) constrains the ‘virtuality’ of that body, the possibilities open to it on account of the finite, particular nature of bodies which are inherently restricted in the actions they can perform in space and time. The enframing of habit thus represents a mechanism whereby the virtuality inherent to habituated practices becomes constrained and limited.

To return the discussion to Lucy, what we have in this analysis is an account of ‘routinised practice’ as being both a means of providing stability and cohesion, but also a form of absorption, of virtuality. When Lucy is going about her work routine in an unreflective manner, this constitutes the construction of an unchallenged, cohesive frame in which she may ‘enunciate’ (to employ Harrison’s term) her practices without having to rationalise or justify them, indeed where such rationalisation and justification are not even considered. Her practice is ‘enframed’ in this way by a building up of various routinised practices, all of which constitute her Particular Case of Learning Development. The stability and cohesion that this represents is what Lucy seeks to return to when her routines are disrupted through the various crises of normativity that we have outlined. At the same time, the non-reflective nature of her practice means that Lucy is in some sense absorbed in it. She is immersed in her routine to the extent that

she does not seek to define or determine what exactly she is doing every step of the way. The virtuality that this represents is the virtuality inherent to an indeterminate conception of Learning Development, one that is not yet actualised for Lucy. In some ways it is a non-conception of Learning Development, for it is not subject to conceptualisation until the spell is broken and Lucy's routinised practice is subjected to reflective scrutiny. This is the consequence of the normative crises – they force Lucy to step back from her practices and to contemplate them from a distance. At this point – and only at this point – her practices, her Particular Case of Learning Development is actualised. The dice fall, their faces are shown and the numbers are read: a representation is formed and all remaining virtuality, the potential inherent in these practices prior to the distancing of contemplation, is eliminated. In its place are actual practices, reflected upon, interpreted, communicated.

Let us draw together the threads of the argument presented in this chapter so far. We are examining in detail the practice of Learning Development through the eyes of Lucy. chapter One set out to establish that Lucy's sense of being a practitioner of Learning Development comes to the fore for her at moments I have called 'normative crises'. These are the moments in her working day when circumstances arise that give Lucy cause to break from the unconscious routines that she has established in order to reflect consciously on what she is doing. In this way, I have argued for a distinction between routinised, habitual practices on the one hand, and reflective, represented practices on the other.

Routine and habit, I have suggested in the first part of the present chapter, are often cast in a negative light, being seen as fixed ways of thinking and acting that need to be overcome in order to free the individual from their limited range of thoughts and behaviours. The way that habits are to be overcome is through forms of disruption in which the practitioner is 'unsettled', and new ways of thinking and acting are initiated. However, I have also argued that this 'unsettling' comes at a cost in terms of energy and self-efficacy (or confidence). Hence, routine and habit offer a form of protection for a practitioner like Lucy, an 'habitual enframing' which allows her to conduct her work without having to constantly expend energy and be consumed by self-doubt. While Lucy wishes to be open to fresh ways of thinking, she instinctively protects established

patterns and habits in order to preserve her energies and her self-identity as a practitioner.

I went on to link this idea of ‘habitual enframing’ with Deleuze’s concepts of virtuality and actuality, with habit and routine representing bodily establishment of *actual* practices through repetition, which in turn have the tendency to constrain the *virtuality* of the practitioner, which is to say, their capacity to evolve their practices, as the range of practices (thinking and acting) is confined to the extent of her established routines. Nevertheless, habitual practices also permit a level of absorption for Lucy insofar as she is able to act without having to consciously think about what she is doing, and this immersion itself constitutes a form of virtuality, as her unreflected, unconsidered actions may take a range of forms and be actualised in an array of permutations depending on what is required by the circumstance. Hence, the habitual constrains, but within the bounds of those constraints, also permits a fluidity of action. This corresponds with Deleuze’s concept of the *passive synthesis* of time, directed at the present (that is, the unfolding moment). Taken together, the habitual enframing of routine practices constitutes Lucy’s Particular Case of practice in its pre-reflective form, functional and responsive to a limited but well-established range of circumstances, and, in effect, ‘energy-efficient’; it is the normative crises which provide the unsettling disruption that shift it into a reflective mode.

Chapter 7: Represented Practice

We can therefore understand Lucy's Particular Case of LD as consisting in no small part of an 'habitual enframing' of practices, accrued in strata over the course of her working life and enacted from one day to the next. This facet of her practice is largely unconscious, subject to a *passive synthesis*; that is until such a time that their contents are 'unpacked' and reflected upon consciously. I have argued that such a 'coming into consciousness' occurs at moments of crisis, when habits de-contract, and what is expected fails to materialise. I have also argued that such moments are generative of the very sensibility of practice itself, the identification of oneself *as* a practitioner. However, if habit and the expectations that constitute it are unconscious, what is the mechanism of this presumed 'unpacking' and 'coming into consciousness' that transforms the unconscious habit into a form of conscious awareness?

There is a problem in trying to capture an account of the 'unconscious' and 'habitual' in the way that we have been doing, for all the accounts of Lucy's experiences of Learning Development presented thus far have been self-consciously reflective in nature, written as if Lucy was talking to the reader. There is an inherent artificiality to such a presentation of ideas, even as it permits certain issues to be presented in a more concrete, narrative way than would otherwise be possible. The account presented at the start of 2.1 above, for example, attempted to hint at some of the issues around routine and reflexivity, but could not really capture the routinised and habitual without doing so in an indirect, reflective way.

What would be going through Lucy's head when she is not being self-consciously reflective? What might such an account look like? We obtain a sense of this 'non reflective' mode of narrative from the pen of a range of modernist writers, from the likes of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf to more contemporary writers such as Will Self, whose 'stream of consciousness' I emulate here by way of example, as we follow Lucy's trip across campus to a meeting:

Shit. Late. Birds singing, lalala. Lala Land. Haven't seen the film. Who's got time?
The time is nigh. The time is right. What is the time? Now is the time. Gotta get

there on time or they'll crucify me with their eyes. Eyes, eyes. They have it. I have it. We've all got it somehow. That workshop was terrible, terrible. They didn't seem to get it at all. And yet they said they liked it. Was it the sample text? Maybe the slides were too dense? A thicket to get lost in, a seam to mine. Time out of mind. I like that phrase. That's the way a-ha a-ha I like it. That's the way I LIKE IT. Stones over there. In winter you can see them. What to say? I've got a problem. Rita, we have a problem. This thing's just going to blow up in our faces. Face facts, kids, we're screwed! Can't say that, can we ladies? What is it? I'm not going to say it. Tell it like it is? Not likely! In all honesty, we're just trying to help. Paternalism, though, isn't it? Paternalistic. Paternoster, up and down. Pater familias. Father son and holy ghost. What's wrong with helping them. 'Them'. Ha! Us and them. You are not one of us. You don't belong here. That's what we're saying, isn't it? [Hi Jack! Haven't seen you for ages! Can't chat, I'm late for a meeting! Bye!] By-eee! Bye bye love, bye bye happiness, hello Registry Building. I'm going up to room....1.04. That's on the first floor. Paint smell. What are you looking at? Things in my pocket. Big deep breath...[Hi everyone. Hope I'm not too late...] Too late! Too late!³⁰

Such an account does not conform with our need for, or expectation of, clarity when exploring these issues of practice and the practitioner. There is no clear formulation of a problem; nor the expression of a tangible, rational thought process. But this modernist formulation is useful in illustrating an important point about the way the unconscious and habitual differs from the conscious and reflective. The latter contemplates actions or occurrences in a way that constructs them; that is, the order, sequence, and interaction of the elements is considered and contrived in order to convey a particular meaning. In the former, 'stream of consciousness', by contrast, the effect is impressionistic, with whatever comes into the head of the protagonist spilling onto the page in a what can seem a free association of interlacing thoughts, snatches of song, sense impressions, allusions, inner monologue and occasional sequences of actual articulated speech. Although an author contrives these, too, there is an effort to try to capture something of the sense of our everyday waking thought. Three features of this kind of writing are

30 For an extended foray into this kind of written expression, see Self's trilogy *Umbrella* (Self, 2012); *Shark* (Self, 2014); and *Phone* (Self, 2018).

worthy of note in the present discussion. The first is that these impressions are highly responsive to the environment – sights, sounds, smells all penetrate the consciousness, and any semblance of orderly rationalistic thinking is disrupted by these frequent, apparently random (to the reader, who has not sensed them for themselves) sensory intrusions. The second salient feature is how thought is conveyed in a highly allusive fashion. One thought invokes another, sensory input evokes memory, and memories in turn determine the shape of the next thought to cross our minds, which in turn invokes the next. Finally, any sense of coherent thinking or narrative is perpetually disrupted by these sensory (externally-derived) and memory (internally-generated) intrusions, to the extent that even reflective thinking itself cannot be understood as being entirely insulated from thinking that is in, and of, the moment. These attempts to capture non-reflective thinking perhaps inevitably fall short of the reality of thinking itself (they are, after all, mere representations of thought), but in highlighting the sensory-responsiveness, allusive, and fragmentary nature of non-reflective thinking, (that is to say, thinking that is immersed in the moment), we get a little closer to understanding how reflection is so different from other ways of thinking that we experience every day.

The work of Deleuze, and in particular his critique of Kant are instructive in understanding these issues, for they are, at heart, issues relating to representation. Henry Somers-Hall summarises Deleuze's understanding of representation as follows:

Deleuze calls the model of thought that underlies the priority of judgment in thinking representation. Representing an object is key to two processes: memory and recognition. In the case of memory, this is because the object to be remembered is not present. In the case of recognition, we need, in some sense, to compare our internal representation of the object with the object itself. How do we structure such a representation? (Somers-Hall, 2013b, p. 347)

In this view, representation involves our making a judgement as to whether or not a thing (which is present, or within our thoughts) is like or unlike another thing (which is not present, or which is somehow outside us). It is an act of determination that requires a prior understanding of the thing we are trying to determine. As such, representation reduces any particular instance of something to being an expression of a pre-existing, higher order category.

Deleuze's concern was with the limitations of the characterization of the world which subsumed particulars under universals in the form of judgments (Somers-Hall, 2013b, p. 351).

Now, as we have seen, so-called normative crises draw the Learning Development practitioner out of their various routines and force them to consider their actions. They commence with an apprehension of their own Particular Case (the 'One') and seek to look outwards from their particular milieu to imagine how others might act (the 'Many'), to gauge which action is effective or appropriate. This is why such crises can be seen as 'normative' – it is the One's appeal to the Many, the Particular's subordination to the Aggregate, in order to inform or authorise their own particular practice. When Lucy wonders "Can this be done?" in relation to the teaching of academic writing to a lecture hall filled with disengaged engineering students, the implicit question is "Can this be done by me, now?". Note that there is a subtle but significant difference between this formulation and the form: "Can I do this?", for this latter question does not necessarily evoke the capacities of others to perform the task. "Can this be done (by me, now)?", on the other hand, implies that others might well be able to do so. The fact that Lucy is undertaking the task in her capacity as a Learning Developer transforms any suggestion of "*Can I do this?*" into "*Shouldn't I be able to do this?*", and the mechanism of this transformation is representation itself – a judgement as to whether her own present actions are like or unlike the actions of an absent Other. Lucy's actions cannot be separated out from the milieu in which she acts – the lecture theatre, the students, the prior conversations she's had with her academic colleague, her subsequent planning. Put another way, the question "Can I do this?" involves a contextual 'this' which serves to bring Lucy's actions into relation with the (possible, potential, actual) actions of others. Looking outside oneself in this way involves a form of reflective thought which serves to break the mesmeric spell of any contracted habit. Lucy's identification with 'others' here invokes her self-identification as an academic or professional ('academic professional'? 'professional academic'?) within the field (or fields) of practice that Lucy *recognises* as Learning Development. That invocation of identity is a form of representation, and the model of thought that Lucy is adopting in this invocation is fundamentally one of judgement.

The other ‘normative crises’ are characterised by the same processes of representation. When Lucy asks ‘is this permitted?’ when she considers her actions in relation to advising a nursing student on her methodology, this can take the form: ‘would others permit this of someone in my position?’ The position in this case is an invocation of professional identity, and the ‘others’ are those outside that identification – for example, the student’s dissertation supervisor, a figure that is also subject to a form of invocation and representation in Lucy’s mind. The question invites a response: ‘No, I don’t think they would approve of my actions’ or ‘Actually, I think they would see that this is appropriate under the circumstances’. Whatever the judgement, the process involves comparing her present actions with an anticipated absent Other. Likewise, in the final normative crisis outlined in chapter 1, Lucy considers ‘is this the right thing to do?’ in relation to speaking up for her principles in a meeting (or in her case, not speaking up for them, for whatever reason). Again the question has a correlate that emphasises the judgemental nature of the way Lucy is thinking: ‘Is this the right thing for a practitioner of Learning Development to do’, and, ‘what would other people think of me if I did or said the wrong thing?’. How would Lucy be judged – by fellow-practitioners and non-practitioners alike? And how would she judge herself – as a practitioner of LD, or as someone who no longer adhered to the expected ways of speaking or acting? Whatever permutation unfolds, Lucy evokes others and relates their anticipated (but absent) responses to present conditions.

In all of these examples, the various normative crises are obliging Lucy to step out of her internalised, routinised practices in order to invoke and consider something beyond and outside them. Her Particular Case becomes part of a bigger whole, her circumscribed perspective broadened through a reflection on, and later (perhaps), an engagement with an Aggregate View. Her engagement with the Aggregate View (first imagined, and then perhaps realised) represents a distancing of Lucy from her own practice, a separation that is necessary in order to look upon that practice from the imagined – or anticipated – perspective of another. Lucy implicates these others into her own internal world before she actually engages with them to gauge their views and to calibrate her practices against theirs. In other words, she invokes a representation of an absent object – Learning Development – that is recognised as such by her.

If we see Lucy's practices as representing her Particular Case of Learning Development, we can understand these practices as a localised variant of a species of activities: those that pertain directly to her. In other words, Lucy's Particular Case of Learning Development are those practices which are located spatio-temporally around her (that is, physically, in terms of the spaces she occupies and moves through over time). It is this spatio-temporal localism that distinguishes the Particular Case from other manifestations of Learning Development, a limit upon those practices which derives from Lucy's own physical limitations. Lucy's body and what it is capable of doing (for example, where it can be, and for how long) provides a perimeter within which the local/particular is restricted. In this sense, the Aggregate View is merely a bringing together of other forms and manifestations of localised practices (those pertaining to others) from elsewhere into Lucy's own orbit of perception and understanding. Because the Aggregate does not share Lucy's spatio-temporal limitations (her Particular Case can be seen as a subset of the Aggregate of all known Particular Cases), its potential and capabilities necessarily exceed her own. Thus, the *embodiment* of Learning Development practices in Lucy's Particular Case already appear to her inferior in terms of their potential scope and undertaking, when compared with all other practices 'out there'.

However, we have argued that the Aggregate View itself only ever has a localised form. This is the perspective of the aggregator themselves, the individual who draws those various extant practices together from a range of quarters, and considers them together as an identifiable whole. In the case of the LD practitioner this constructed whole is then brought into relation with their own Particular Case of practice. Here, then, we may pause and take stock of what has happened to the 'Aggregate View' in all of this, for we have shifted our focus somewhat. In chapter One, the Aggregate View was set out as a sum of Particular Cases, indeed, an aggregation of them. From Lucy's perspective of practice, that Aggregate might take the form of a consensus or debate amongst colleagues, the findings of case studies and other forms of published research, responses to a question or debate posted on an online list server – whatever form multiple 'Particular Cases' might take that can be apprehended by her. But in the examples above, we have moved this conception on slightly to distinguish between the 'imagined' Aggregate View and a 'realised' Aggregate View of practice, between an Aggregate that

Lucy merely imagines or anticipates, and an Aggregate that Lucy engages and interacts with.

However, this ‘imagined Aggregate’ is not the same as the Aggregate View we have developed, although Lucy cannot make out this distinction. Rather, the imagined ‘Aggregate’ is the way that Lucy conceives of the ‘pre-existing, higher order category’, the ‘universal’ that Deleuze opines as the restrictive consequence of representational thinking. This ‘Universal Picture’ of practice, more specifically, is *the Universal Picture for Lucy at a particular point in time and in a particular place*. Here we may usefully summarise the influence of Aristotelian thinking on the way Lucy and other Learning Development practitioners conceptualise (and represent) their practice. The quote by Somers-Hall above continues:

We normally see objects as composed of substances and properties, and we describe these objects using concepts structured in parallel terms of subjects and predicates. Depending on how many predicates we ascribe to an object, we can determine which objects fall under that concept. For example, we can restrict the application of a concept by stipulating that it only applies to objects having a certain property. This is, for instance, the model we find in Aristotle’s account of definition, where the species to which an object belongs is defined by the progressive division of a genus into smaller and smaller classes. For example, if we want to determine what the definition of something is, we may begin with a very general property of it, like the notion of a living body, and by adding a further determination, say that of being sensitive, we can further define it as an animal body. Animals can be further divided into rational and nonrational animals. By the continual addition of properties to our characterization of a particular, we therefore cut down the field of particulars our definition applies to, until we conclude with a definition that only applies to one class of particulars, in this case, man, as a rational animal. Each of these properties functions as a generality, in that it applies to a group of particulars, but by combining them, we are able to provide an adequate definition of at least a class of them (Somers-Hall, 2013b, p. 347)

In this ‘normal’ view,³¹ we may seek to ‘define’ Learning Development by first determining a very general property of it. Then we proceed by adding particular qualities that conform to this general picture until, through combination or negation, we arrive at the predicates that determine the object we have identified. Thus, according to this way of thinking, by limiting the number of predicates that apply to the object ‘Learning Development’, we may arrive at its definition. To do so is a matter of determining what these predicates are.

Who undertakes the process of determining the predicates for a definitive Learning Development? When does this occur and why? In the present account, it is Lucy who attempts this task, and she does so at moments of so-called ‘crisis’ in order to determine whether her own actions and her own situation correspond to what might be considered normal for others in her position, her fellow practitioners. It is a lack of certainty, a lack of confidence, indeed a *lack* that precipitates the crisis (of expectation, legitimacy, conduct) in whatever form it takes. Lucy seeks authorisation, validation of her own actions, and guidance for her future activity from beyond her present milieu, her Particular Case. In order to obtain such authorisation, Lucy constructs an Aggregate View from her knowledge and awareness of other practices, alongside her anticipation of what those practices *could* or *ought to* consist of. Her Aggregate View can never be anything other than a perspective on practices outside her own domain of practice, and it can never have any actual or physical presence or embodiment in practice, but can only ever be a generalised representation of practices³². This generalised picture becomes indistinguishable from the *best practices*, which always and only occur beyond Lucy’s limited embodiment of practice. Lucy’s own practices, limited by her flesh, her embodiment in a particular milieu, can never stand up to the idealised practices of the always absent Other. The Aggregate of Aggregates, the best possible expression of practice forms, within Lucy’s mind, when she considers what her practice *ought to be*,

31 The ‘normal view’ here corresponds with Aristotle’s own notion of the *endoxa*, the commonly held (or common-sense) view of something that has persisted over time (see Aristotle’s *Topics of the Organon* (Aristotle, 1994).

32 The Aggregate View as it is being developed here is now closer to the way Klossowski’s reading of Nietzsche opposes the ‘singular’ (here, the Particular Case) not to the ‘universal’ but to the ‘herd’ or ‘species’ which: “reduces the singularity of the individual to a common denominator and expresses only what can be communicated” (Smith, 2005, p. 9). My own reading of this idea is that this in turn engenders and invokes the universal.

that is, the predicates that apply to the objectified, generalised Learning Development she anticipates exists beyond her own Particular Case of it.

In fact, this transcendent, ideal practice is a fiction generated by a belief in the category 'Learning Development' itself, and promulgated through its various representations. Learning Development is a self-generating fiction which arises when Lucy's own particular perspective on an Aggregate View (of the practices of others, in relation to her own) is mistaken for a Universal Picture of it. Her imperfect, embodied Particular Case of practice is an actualised entity – it exists in concrete form and can be directly apprehended by Lucy. By contrast, the Aggregate View of practice that she concocts has no concrete expression, no embodied form. It is a collation, a compilation, an abstraction, an anticipation of possible practices, not an actual entity in itself. Insofar as we accept this proposition, we may view the Aggregate View as comprising a *virtual* Learning Development. Lucy in effect misapprehends the *virtual* for an *actual* thing. In so doing, she generates the transcendent category herself, but mistakes it for something that has arisen before her and beyond her. Hence we may say that the transcendent category (of any object) is generated when the virtual is mistaken for the actual³³.

To summarise, the present chapter has examined what happens to Lucy as she responds to these normative crises, as her habitual routines are shifted into her conscious awareness. This commenced with a discussion of the problem of representing Lucy's conscious thoughts themselves, and the example of the stream of consciousness from various modernist writers was drawn on to illustrate the problematics of representation. Any account of thoughts arriving into consciousness suffer from a lack of clarity and focus, and are highly impressionistic and associative. While it is arguable that such modernist narratives are 'realistic', they do show how conscious thought itself, however represented, is highly reactive to environmental stimuli, either of a sensory (generated from outside) or memory-derived (generated from within) nature. In addition, thoughts

³³ Take for example the notion of 'best practice'.. The term implies a form of practice that is better than all the other variations in the Aggregate View and is viewed as such through some sort of agreement or consensus. It may well be true that Lucy's work could be improved by adopting such practices; but equally, Lucy may find that her adoption of the 'best practices' is in fact sub-optimal in her Particular Case. Here 'best practice' represents a form of virtuality that may or may not be actualised in each Particular Case to which it is applied, but which is presented and understood to be an actual entity. As such, the concept of a 'best' practice may serve to occlude, circumscribe or limit those other extant virtualities which might otherwise be given expression (with thanks to Adrian Skilbeck for suggesting this connection).

represented in this way tend to be highly allusive, with each instance of thought fluidly connecting to another, and so generating the next thought in long interconnected chains that draw upon inside and outside alike. As a consequence, our conscious thought can be seen to be highly fragmentary and disconnected, very different to the self-conscious narratives in which Lucy has been represented here.

Deleuze emphasises the dual roles of judgement and recognition in representation, with each instance where we re-present something to our consciousness effectively reducing that thing to the mere expression of some pre-existing category: “this is like that” becomes the prevailing mode of our thinking under the regime of representation. For Lucy, the drawing into consciousness of her habituated routines leads her into an attempt to re-cognise her practice, that is, to think again of something already thought, and thus to draw the particularities of her own practices into relation with the pre-existing practices of others – actual or anticipated. Alongside any recognition comes a judgement – like, or unlike? Herein lies the method of aggregation wherein Lucy’s Particular Case is drawn into an Aggregate View. As a consequence, Learning Development, as an identifiable (that is, recognisable) entity, is generated by Lucy (as a practitioner) at the moment of recognition and judgement. This judgement extends beyond the act of recognition to the act of anticipation, as Lucy considers how her own particular actions would be judged by others – would they be recognised as Learning Development, and she a Learning Developer? These acts of recognition and judgement (representation), and the relation and anticipation that follows all serve to *distance* Lucy from her practices, a distancing that distinguishes what she is doing from what she anticipates that others might do. The final point made in this second part of the chapter is that this distancing itself transforms any ‘Aggregate View’ into something other than a mere ‘collection of particulars’, for what Lucy anticipates is not an *actual* aggregate, but an imagined one; whereas her own particular practices are delimited and structured by the very embodiment of her being as *Lucy*, the Aggregate View that she constructs has no such constraints. Rather, it is a disembodied, abstract entity. It is this abstracted, generalised, Learning Development that Lucy seeks to relate her own particular practices, and against which she judges them.

Chapter 8: Reactive Practice

Another time my colleague Paul asked me the same question, what had I been up to that morning, and it was the morning when I'd had the tutorial with Eleanor the nursing student who had wanted to know about research methods. And that did stick in my mind. I immediately told Paul all about it and asked him what he thought, what he would do. We had quite a long discussion about it, actually. That tutorial was somehow different from the others because I'd had cause to doubt my response, my approach, and I'd had to think carefully about what I was saying and doing. There was a different quality to that tutorial because of those...insecurities, I think you might call them. I had felt very self-conscious at that time, choosing my words carefully, and that feeling persisted long after the tutorial had finished. Paul and I discussed it. I thought about it on and off throughout the day. Normally, I can sort of go into 'auto-pilot' and respond to the moment with a degree of confidence. On that occasion I didn't feel confident at all. The whole thing had knocked me off my stride.

A gap is beginning to open up between Lucy and her practice. Confronted by crisis the Learning Developer *reacts*. As we have seen, this reaction comprises in part a disruption of routine and a stepping back, the distancing from activity required in order to reflect. Without focusing on what constitutes reflection itself, we may say that its effect is one that precipitates a shift in the practitioner's tempo and rhythm. If habituated, routinised practices consist of preconscious activity undertaken unreflectively and repetitively,³⁴ then a sudden arousal and awakening will at least add a pause before the next iteration, if only to permit the unconscious mind to make its deliberations known consciously. We may also consider the prospect that the disruption of these routines constitutes an intensification of virtuality, a pulling away from the limits of *enframed, habitual* practices into a domain of increased potentiality and capacity; a de-framing if you will, increasing what is possible for the practitioner to see and to say (Harrison, 2000, p. 506).

34 What Merleau-Ponty would term 'pre-reflexive intentionality' (Merleau-Ponty, 2015)

This may seem at first to be an overwhelmingly positive occurrence – recall that Deleuze decries the stratification of habitual activity and its consequent self-limiting of capacities. But as we have also seen, such stratification provides a protective carapace as it serves to limit the ‘noise’ of the virtual, filtering it out and permitting the practitioner a modicum of stability. This stability in turn permits Lucy to act without reflection, to be immersed in her environment and responsive to it. Although constrained, her virtuality, is, in effect, fully available to be actualised. The destabilisation that accompanies the various crises of normativity disrupts too the tempo and rhythm of the established pattern of action: Reflection disturbs and distracts.

Reflection here may also be characterised as a bringing into consciousness that which hitherto was unconscious, and here we find an echo in Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche, by way of Freud. In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze summarises Freud’s so-called ‘Topical Hypothesis’ as follows:

The system that receives an excitation is not the system which retains a lasting trace of it: the same system could not at one and the same time faithfully record the transformations which it undergoes and offer an ever-fresh receptivity. ‘We will therefore suppose that an external system of the apparatus receives the perceptible excitations but retains nothing of them, and thus has no memory; and that, lying behind this system there is another which transforms the momentary excitation of the first into lasting traces’. These two systems or recordings correspond to the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious (Deleuze, 1986, p. 105)

In this account, the receptive, perceptual system responds to externalities, it is stimulated and excited by them. This is a continual process as the subject perpetually engages with the world around them. Perceptible excitations are received but not retained in memory – they are unconscious. Thus, a second system transforms the (unconscious) momentary excitation into ‘lasting traces’, that is, into memory. It is these lasting traces which are then available to conscious reflection.

Deleuze invokes this Freudian account in order to better understand Nietzsche’s concept of reaction. For Nietzsche, the way someone or something reacts to someone or something else can be viewed positively or negatively, depending on how that reaction

unfolds. At its most positive (for Nietzsche), reaction can be seen as ‘active’, creative, and dominant in the sense that the reaction is not itself dominated by the thing (force) that it is reacting to. This is reaction in the form of the *riposte*, of ‘acting one’s reactions’ (Deleuze, 1986, p. 104). By contrast, a reaction might also be seen as not ‘acting one’s reactions’, but rather as a response that is entirely dominated by the thing (force) which it reacts to. This distinction cuts to the heart of Nietzsche’s philosophy of forces, which holds that everything in the world constitutes some kind of force, and that every force is either dominant (active) or dominated (reactive). Bring two or more forces into relation (whatever those forces may be), and one will tend to dominate the other. In this view equilibrium is rare and fleeting, and the relation in which one force simply balances or counter-acts the other exceptional. For the most part, for Nietzsche, relations between entities in the world are characterised by this interplay of domination and submission. Rather than being a simple account of the Manichean brutality of existence (the forces of Good battling the forces of Evil), Nietzsche’s ontological picture is seen by Deleuze as being particularly useful in taking forward Kant’s work, for it provides the basis for understanding the way values – all values – are necessarily subject to power relations, to the interplay of forces. This in turn is valuable in the present work as it permits us to conceptualise Learning Development similarly as an entity that is itself contingent on, and shaped by, competing forces.

According to Nietzsche’s account, Lucy’s apprehension and recognition of her actual practices represents an affirmation of necessity, an acknowledgement and acceptance of the way things really are (the dice as they have fallen). Crisis thus evokes the impulse to affirm what is necessary: No longer absorbed in the practices, Lucy can reflect upon them, and the practices themselves appear bounded and contained. This represents a separation from her practice, a distancing: ‘We temporarily abandon life in order to then temporarily fix our gaze upon it’ (Deleuze, 1986, p. 24). But in so doing, Lucy risks elevating necessity above all else::

I’ve been thinking a bit more about that tutorial with Eleanor, the nursing student and the whole idea of overstepping the bounds in terms of what we teach in the Centre. We’re not really obliged or expected to go into research methods, and I’m not sure many of the others in the team would do what I did. Paul mentioned he probably wouldn’t have, given his background (in fine arts).

But on balance, I'm glad I did it. She was clearly in need of assistance, and to turn her away when I had the capacity to help her was the right thing to do, even if it puts a few noses out of joint in the Nursing School. That is, if it even gets back to them. I'm not sure what I was so worried about, to be honest. It's clear to me now that this was the right course of action to take under the circumstances.

'Lasting traces', memories, are what permit conscious reflection. Once something is no longer perceptible, we can no longer contemplate it unless we have the means of recreating through some form of representation. Memory here can be seen as a re-presentation of what was perceived in the past. Representation is the mechanism of memory, and of the conscious reflective act. But we are creatures of perception. All our waking hours are filled with perceptions, sensations, responses to our environment – light, heat, vibration, chemical sensation; even our non-waking hours are filled with sensation and perception as our bodies sleep and dream. Freud suggests that human beings deal with this mass of sensory input through a process of filtering which Nietzsche refers to as the 'normal faculty of forgetting' (Deleuze, 1986, pp. 112-113). It is this faculty which prevents memory traces from continually erupting to the surface. Forgetting is thus the faculty which permits the subject to obtain a modicum of coherence with respect to the world in which they live, delimiting their perceptual milieu and thus engendering a level of consistency in which their ego can be maintained. Forgetting is, in this conception, an active force which fulfils an important role in maintaining a coherent sense of subjectivity.³⁵ In Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche, this particular force is functional, acting as a 'guard' or a 'supervisor' that protects the

35 In his 1942 short story "Funes, his memory" (alternatively, 'Funes the memorious'), Borges explores memory and forgetting by creating in the character of Ireneo Funes a character who, following an accident that physically cripples him, remembers everything in minute detail (Borges, 1999). Possessed of this incredible faculty for memory, Funes is said to be "a precursor of the superman, 'an untamed and vernacular Zarathustra'" who nevertheless possessed "certain incurable limitations", whose unsurpassable memory Funes himself characterises as a "garbage disposal". Through the narrator of the story, Borges states his view plainly: "In truth, we all live by leaving behind". A breaking down of this capacity is antithetical to life. Funes, in his incapacity to forget, exists in a kind of frenetic stasis, over-stimulated but incapable of real action (he is said to be "not very capable even of thought"). Paola Cori links Borges' conception of time at play in Borge's story with Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, the unfolding of time as an infinite series of virtual forking paths, only certain sequences of which can be actualised (Cori, 2011). Funes, however, lacks control over the detail of memory, cannot select, and thereby cannot freely act within the world, his prodigious memory thereby lacking the key feature of the rhizomatic, that is the capacity to connect that which it forms a part of. We can take from this the importance of the faculty of forgetting in enabling our meaningful connection to the world

functioning of the ego as an individual entity, distinct from the world in which it subsists.

The faculty of forgetting is instrumental in the formation of habit, as the repetition of certain activities induces a contraction of the elements of those activities into a coherent whole. It is the contraction itself, and the elements that precede the contraction, that are here forgotten. The repeating sequence (AB AB AB AB...) once contracted into a whole necessitates the forgetting of the elements A and B as separate entities; only the contracted whole is retained, and habitually repeated and expected. AB as a whole is consciously apprehended, while its elements A and B of which it is formed are forgotten, pushed into the unconscious. Without the faculty of forgetting, the contraction of elements into wholes is disrupted. Likewise, when the faculty of forgetting is itself disrupted, the process of contraction ceases to function. If we cease to forget, then the unconscious traces rise to the surface of consciousness, erupting into view, breaking up contracted wholes into their constituent elements. Habitual actions, by the same token, become subject to hesitancy and doubt as their contracted components become distinct. It is these distinct components, these unconscious traces, that then become the object of our conscious attention.

Once unconscious traces begin to filter through to the conscious mind, they begin to occupy its capacities for receptivity and responsiveness. In other words, the conscious mind is forced to react to them as if they were perceptual stimulus from the world around them. These 'excitations' from within compete with excitations from without. The capacity for the subject (ego) to act in response to their world is consequently disrupted as it reacts to stimuli from within. In Nietzsche's language, the subject can no longer 'act their reaction' to the material world, and instead becomes embroiled in reactions to excitations of internal origin, the unconscious traces as they move into consciousness. As the ego reacts to these now-perceptible traces, its reaction to the world ceases to be acted. In this way, active forces are deprived of the material conditions of their functioning. They can no longer do their job (act their reactions to the world) and are effectively separated from what they can do. This is what Nietzsche terms 'becoming reactive'. The necessity of responding to this over-stimulus has the effect of diverting Lucy's energies from the task at hand, in Nietzsche's language, "separating a force from what it can do" ((Deleuze, 1986, p. 115). Depending on the

situation, Lucy might have the resources to cope with this psychically taxing situation, and may respond actively, creatively; however, such a response requires an expenditure of energy, so whatever her initial response may be, she cannot keep it up for long. This over-stimulation has a physical, visceral component, and an emotional one. Her heart-rate can rise, she may become flushed, physical tics may manifest. She can become flustered, defensive, stressed. This is the somatic correlate of the psychological state.

Thus, for Lucy in her day-to-day teaching role, she acts in a largely habitual fashion, having contracted the elements of her work into coherent wholes which permit the 'habitual framing' of her practitioner identity. In a state of habitual absorption, she responds and reacts to the situation in her class or work setting as it arises, acting her reaction. As I have argued, this habitual action is periodically disrupted as situations extend beyond the frame of her habitual engagement: a student asks a question that she feels uncertain to respond to ("...is this permitted?"); a fellow academic asks her to perform a task that she feels uncertain can be attained ("...can this be done?"); an academic manager raises an expectation on her work that she cannot be sure is within the bounds of her ethical self-understanding ("...is this the right thing to do?"). As these disruptions occur (and they are not always earth-shattering, distinctly articulated questions; rather, they are more like distinct perturbations on an otherwise smooth field of activity), the elements that comprise Lucy's habitual contraction of the situation are reduced to their constituent elements, which erupt into her consciousness. This, I suggest, is how the disruption is perceived by Lucy: not as an articulate and understandable question as I have summarised above ("...is this permitted?"; "...can this be done?"; "...is this the right thing to do?"), but rather as a series of apparently disconnected thoughts ("...what should I say to that?"; "...that's strange"; "...Ummm..."; "...Shit!") and physical/emotional responses (anxiety; a clenched jaw; fiddling with fingers; looking away; a sense of flushing; a sudden welling of anger). These are reactions to the non-appearance of a contracted sequence (the students all looked blank when they should have all nodded; the colleague frowned when I gave my reply when I thought they would smile; I'm showing them a slide that now seems not to make as much sense as I thought it would), and it is these reactions that Lucy's consciousness now apprehends and reacts to – rather than to whatever is in front of her: a student, a colleague, an email message. The tempo of her actions is disturbed, and a hesitancy forms; she is not sure what to do now, although she may continue to act (or be

obliged to, in front of students and colleagues); but she is now distracted, unfocused, her actions no longer subject to the rhythms of habit, but rather the subject of conscious decision-making, deliberation. Absorption has broken down, replaced by a higher-energy state of sifting through possible actions, and selection of the action to take. Not all situations Lucy finds herself in are going to correspond to either of these extremes (entirely smooth and untroubled; unmitigated crisis), and most of the time 'crises' need not be thought of as the most extreme situations, but rather as variations and perturbations along a continuum of everyday experiences.

If passive synthesis, formed of contracted habit, is constitutive of the subject, then the agitated state that Lucy finds herself in as unconscious traces rise into consciousness corresponds to what Deleuze terms 'active synthesis', and is constitutive of the object. By 'constituting the object' here we mean the way the subject comes to understand herself objectively, as a participant in the world. Her actions and responses are no longer the composites of habit, but the result of an active, conscious engagement with memory, in 'real time', as it were (insofar as the world is emerging as she reflects), but not 'in the moment' (as her consciousness is distracted from the emerging world and focused inwards). The self-aware sifting and selecting of potential actions takes the form of reactivity, an expression of psychic energy that takes the place of a certain responsiveness to what is unfolding, displacing a free engagement or occupation with what is occurring in the world with an engaged reactivity, a preoccupation. In seeking to orientate the ego back towards action, the reactive subject must expend a great deal of effort to re-contract their perceptual world from de-contracted fragments back into workable wholes. For Lucy, her entire repertoire of potential words and actions is effectively spilled upon the stage of her activity, and she is reduced to distractedly sorting through it while the world of action unfolds around her. The actions, approaches, or ideas she selects are selected consciously, by contrast or comparison with each other, a process of evaluation. She is obliged to draw relations between possible actions, examining their antecedents and prior applications for potential applicability to the present moment. As such, active synthesis is engaged primarily with the past rather than the present. Here we are characterising reflection not so much in terms of an extended period of pondering the possibilities, but more as a rapid, hastily constructed engagement with memory that is enforced through the imperative to react to what is

occurring in the here and now, and which distracts the likes of Lucy from whatever is unfolding before her.

The fragments and components of contraction (the As and Bs formerly construed as AB), in rising up from the unconscious into consciousness, transform from formerly forgotten traces into freshly perceived excitations. As we have seen, these have a distracting effect upon the practitioner, as they are separated from what they are capable of doing, their consciousness ceasing to be absorbed and immersed in the unfolding present (AB AB AB AB...) and instead drawn into contemplation of the erupting traces (A B B A A B AB AB BB AA..), eager to re-contract them into functioning wholes through the sensing of a pattern that permits their interconnection. Recall that habit is an embodied phenomenon, as habits are contracted in the actions of a body through a particular time and across a particular space. Lucy's habitual practices are particular to her. They are Lucy's habits, formed through her own repeated thoughts and actions, and nobody else's. The uniqueness of any given Particular Case of practice is an embodied perspective of practice.

In this third section, I have outlined the consequences for Lucy of the shift from habitual routine into a reflective representation of practices. This state corresponds with what Deleuze refers to as *active synthesis* of time, directed at the past (that is, memory). Summarising Deleuze's reading of Freud and Nietzsche, I have argued that the mechanism of Lucy's reflection and representation of her own practices of Learning Development can be understood in terms of traces, forgetting and reaction. According to Freud's 'topical hypothesis', our cognition consists of two psychic systems – the one receptive to perceptual stimuli, the other laying down 'lasting traces' in the form of memory. As not all perceptual stimuli are laid down as memories, much of what we perceive is responded to unconsciously; so too the traces of memory – they too become unconscious, leaving us free to respond to the world as it unfolds.

When we bring something from the unconscious into our consciousness (that is, when we reflect, or re-present those traces to our consciousness as memories), we are effectively adding an additional stimulus on top of whatever sensory-perceptual stimulus currently occupies us. In order to avoid being overwhelmed by stimulus, we require what Nietzsche refers to as the 'faculty of forgetting'. This faculty of forgetting

is crucial to the establishment of habit, for otherwise we would have to be consciously reflective of everything we perceive – an exhausting prospect, and plainly not what happens to us in our daily lives. Forgetting is, in effect, the mechanism that protects and ‘enframes’ the ego, what permits us to contract ‘wholes’ and forget that they are constituted by component parts, and is, in Nietzschean terms, an *active force*. For Nietzsche, all relations are relations of forces, and all forces are either *active* or *reactive*. Active forces are those that dominate, reactive forces those that are dominated by them. Not all *reactions* to active forces are themselves *reactive*: it is possible for a force that is affected by another force to ‘act its reaction’, and thus present a ‘riposte’ in the form of a counter-action. Far from being simply a negation of something, the ‘faculty of forgetting’ is a positive, active response to the world as it preserves and protects the ego. Hence, when Lucy contracts habits and forms her routines of practice, she is exercising the active faculty of forgetting; when she is confronted with a so-called ‘normative crisis’, that faculty of forgetting lapses. The ‘lasting traces’ laid down as memory erupt back to the surface, are re-presented to her consciousness, and she is confronted by an additional source of perceptual stimulus, originating from within, which she must respond to.

Chapter 9: Innovative Practice

Oh God, that meeting keeps running through my mind. The Learning and Teaching Committee, talking about the student engagement project. Really important for my team, and for Rita my line manager, in particular. I have made clear to her my deep misgivings about directing an initiative at a particular ethnic group on the basis of vaguely understood statistics, but Rita's position is that we proceed with the project in order to maintain our good standing with the university. Not to kick up a fuss and call into question our team's importance within the institution, I guess. So here I am deputising for my boss, Rita, and Sheila, the rep from Health Sciences really laid into me, and I just took it. Took one for the team, I suppose. Here's me defending something I have my own doubts about, defending it from someone who is actually expressing those doubts right back at me! By rights I should have just agreed with her then and there! That would have stirred things up. Instead I babbled and muddled my way through a whole lot of platitudes I didn't really agree with, just so our team didn't look bad. I suppose I can justify it that way. But at that moment, as she was making her points, it was awful. I was scrabbling for something reasonable to say, but all the justifications seemed hollow. My jaw felt stiff as I spoke and I felt myself going red. I could hear the defensive hostility in my own voice. "Look, Sheila, I agree with you, but these statistics are the best we have available to us...". But then I'd try to disagree with her – ineffectively, I might add. I looked like a fool. I can't help feeling resentful of Rita for making me do this.

Lucy's repertoire is spilled upon the stage of her activity. Confronting these fragments of her thought, practices, reflections, assumptions, prior actions, and other assorted components of de-contracted habits, Lucy, under the pressure of the pressing moment, draws them into relation with one another in order to formulate her response. This is an enforced contraction, not forged through repetition and refinement, but through an improvised act of sifting and selection that occurs in order to quickly re-enframe and protect her ego. Such responsiveness to the requirements of the moment can carry with

it a certain spontaneity and creativity, and this possibility must not be hastily dismissed. The de-contracting³⁶ of habit, the destabilising of a previously stable whole, can create the conditions in which creativity might be exercised, as something new can now replace what has been destroyed. What prevents a truly creative response (a ‘riposte’, in Nietzsche’s words), is the draw of the *Universal Picture*, for what replaces the disrupted habit is not so much *created* as (re)constructed and (re)presented to the self.

As we have seen, habitual embodiment results from a passive synthesis, a pre-reflective absorption in the present. When the habit is disrupted, the resulting active synthesis of memory and reflection engenders an engagement with the past – drawing into relation the previous actions of self and others in order to formulate appropriate action in the present. In the former case, in habit, the practice of Learning Development simply ‘happens’ as Lucy goes about her work; by contrast, in the latter case, in memory, the practice of Learning Development is consciously constructed. When the ‘repertoire’ of Lucy’s potential actions is spilled upon the stage and pored over, what was internal and implicit to Lucy’s practice, unconsciously part of it, are made explicit and externalised. Others – real and anticipated – are evoked, and their actions speculated upon or remembered; her own particular actions are compared and contrasted with these possibilities in an heuristic way, with a view to adoption and re-contraction. In so doing, such practices are de-particularised, disembodied, viewed as if from the outside. Another way of putting this is that such actions and practices thus represented are *generalised* from the particular, and in this way an Aggregate View of practice is formulated as one which applies generally, and not in any specified setting.

It is this externalisation (so that the components of an aggregate appear to be generated from outside Lucy’s own experience) and de-particularisation (whereby what is particular to Lucy’s own practice is taken as a general feature of Learning

36 Here a reversal of the ‘contraction of habit’ derived from Deleuze’s reading of Hume. ‘Contract’ has a number of senses deriving from the Latin con- (with) tract (to pull) – ‘to pull together’. English usage of the term can convey a legal contract (which is a set of terms ‘pulled together’ by mutual agreement); the sense of growing smaller or shrinking (extremities being pulled into the centre); and to contract a disease (wherein the host and the pathogen are ‘pulled together’ to form a particular kind of relationship). The Humean sense is arguably closest to the latter, for the habits we contract are something that permeate us, constituting a new assemblage of parts. To de-contract falls short of an active ‘pushing apart’ (the antonym of contract) and instead is suggestive of a loosening, wherein the centre ceases to exert motive force precipitating a drifting apart, destabilising the prior assemblage. This also falls short of a ‘cure’ for the ‘contracted’ infection, but represents a weakening of any pathogenic action (and hence, a weakening of the habitual).

Development) that generates a sense of the Universal Picture of practice from a *particular* Aggregate View. As we have already established in Part One, one of the features of an aggregate is that it can be composed of any number of particular components. When examining the literature on Learning Development, certain features of this field (or fields) of practice can be identified as essential or defining from this or that book or paper, from this or that perspective. This leads us to the problem of definition: which combination or aggregate of features *best* characterises or defines a composite entity? According to whose view is this the case? Who authorises it? When is it appropriate? The construction of an Aggregate View from Particular Cases, and the election of one view as somehow or other being more representative of the essence of something says more about the electors – their interests and their values – than it does about the thing itself. To confront the questions of interest, authority, and value are to confront a complex web of relationality, something Lucy-as-practitioner has little or no time for. The pressures of the moment (which oblige Lucy to react) do not permit such diligent consideration. However, the very disembodiment of the aggregate that Lucy constructs – externalised, de-particularised, generalised – permits the very possibility of essentialist thinking, of a transcendent category that is generated and exists in a world beyond Lucy’s own limited extent.

We can think of this process of generating the transcendent Universal Picture as *metaleptical*, using a term employed by Judith Butler in her theorising of performativity and gender. Metalepsis is “the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself” (Butler, 1990, p. xv), a process whereby the act of anticipation conjures its object. In the act of even contemplating the possibility of an authoritative Universal Picture of Learning Development practice – a definitive account – Lucy effectively constructs one from the Aggregate View of practice that she sees as occupying a space outside and beyond her own Particular Case of practice. But this Universal Picture is all Lucy’s doing. It is a disembodied aggregation of fragments, excitations that preoccupy her consciousness as elements of de-contracted habits bubble up into her consciousness. Although it seems to Lucy to *represent* an ideal form of practice, the essence of Learning Development, it is in fact a construct conjured up by Lucy herself.

On this view, the Universal Picture Lucy is conjuring represents the ‘essence’ of Learning Development. Her fundamental assumption, the *endoxa* of her thought, is that there exists an eternal category of Learning Development, a category whose predicates Lucy represents to herself by stepping away from the immediacy of her practice, by removing herself from her own situation and positing in her place an ideal of the practitioner that she herself wishes to identify with. This idealised self that Lucy conjures in place of her *actual* self embodies the qualities, the particulars, that Lucy attaches to the category of Learning Development. By doing this, Lucy *authorises* whatever course of action she takes. The authority that she invokes exists outside herself, within the ideal category that she is identifying with, a Universal Picture of Learning Development that she takes to be the Aggregate of all Aggregates. This Universal Picture has formed in Lucy’s mind through the interplay of her own Particular Case and whatever Aggregate Views of Learning Development that she has encountered in the past, and any that she might anticipate in the future, real or imagined.³⁷

In this way, the Universal Picture is not a systematically derived category that is defined methodically through a series of deliberate, reflective steps. It is, rather, a chimerical invocation that arises spontaneously through the intersection of the practitioner’s own practices and the remembered, imagined or anticipated practices of others.³⁸ Each of these forms a representation of practice that is at least one step removed from the practice itself, an act of active synthesis. This spontaneous irruption of the ‘essence’ of Learning Development derives from the normative crises that, on occasion, shake the practitioner from their absorption in practice, their routines and engagements with the

37 Recall from the paragraph above that ‘anticipation conjures its object’ (Butler). The point here is that a seemingly external authority derives from an internal process. That is to say, at the psychological level, for Lucy, there is a process of thinking that emerges from the structure of relations between the Particular Case, the Aggregate View, and the Universal Picture.

38 This ‘chimerical invocation’, while a somewhat melodramatic turn of phrase, is nevertheless employed advisedly here to convey something of the nature of the Universal Picture. The mythical Chimera was a composite creature (lion, goat, serpent), monstrous in appearance, neither one thing nor another. The contemporary common use of the term denotes something unreal, fanciful, unfounded (OED). Indeed, the Universal Picture has no actuality as such, yet it retains the power to haunt us, a spectral, immaterial entity with a power and a motive force that has actual effects. The ‘invocation’ of this chimera denotes the genealogy of its power from the intersection of the subject with their world. To enable us to make sense of our surroundings, we insist on its presence, in spite of its ever-present threat to devour us. This ‘spectrality’ of the Universal Picture evokes Derrida’s discussion of the spectre in Marx (Derrida, 2006), the persistence of the absent in presence. Derrida notes (note 6, p. 237) that Husserl identifies such spectral phenomena as *intentional* yet *unreal*. A Deleauzean response to this position would be to say that its intentionality is real enough, but virtual rather than actual. The Universal Picture can be seen in these terms – as a virtuality that haunts every corner of our presence, structuring what we actualise.

world of their work. The Universal Picture represents the ‘essence’ of Learning Development insofar as its qualities are essential predicates for the category to exist at all. These essences are, in effect, ‘reified’ by the practitioner, which is to say the practitioner believes in their own invocation as something that exists above and beyond them, and in a superior position to them. That there is a such a category is not doubted; if there is doubt, it is instead a doubt that the practitioner understands it correctly, and any shortcoming in their interpretation of the Universal Picture is their own error, their own shortcoming, their own inadequacy. This is the *endoxa*, the commonly-held ontological underpinning of the practitioner’s thought, and it represents a form of what DeLanda terms ‘taxonomic essentialism’ (DeLanda, 2006), whereby the object’s defining essences (essential, defining predicates) are derived from reified generalities.

Let us return to Lucy’s practices. What compels her to conjure this chimerical Universal Picture? I am arguing that this is a consequence – we can call it a *natural* consequence³⁹ – of an individual subject’s grappling with their own power – or lack thereof – in the world. In the world, and through it; for we should not mistake anything that the ‘individual subject grapples with’ for something that they do alone, in their own head, as a purely psychological dramatisation. Rather, as we have seen already and will explore in more depth in Part Three, there are broader implications to every narrow particularity. For the time being though, let us concentrate our attention on the ‘psychic hydraulics’ of Lucy’s experience. The disruption or breaking down of habit and the consequent ‘spilling of the repertoire of practices’ also disrupts and breaks down the ‘habitual enframing’ that protects her ego, her sense of self as a practitioner. As we have already discussed, the shift from a passive to an active synthesis of time, from unconscious habit to conscious memory, necessitates a shift into a higher energy state, where Lucy’s psychic resources are taxed more heavily than when she is following the well-worn path of her routinised practices. In the example above, Lucy struggles in a meeting to reconcile her sense of professional self-efficacy with her ethical sensibilities. Her obligation to her line manager, her team-mates, and the university are set against her obligation to an academic colleague and her own vaguely understood ethical position. There is no routine for Lucy to fall back on here, hence her expenditure of energy to reconcile her contradictory obligations, and the physiological and emotional

39 Insofar as this ‘universalising’ impulse is a consequence of all forms of representative thinking, not simply ‘bad’ cases of it.

consequences of such a struggle. We may consider the meeting itself the 'acute' phase of this normative crisis, as it constitutes Lucy's immersion within the crisis as it is unfolding; however, the account also sets out the longer-term consequences of the crisis – Lucy's return to the scene, the meeting "running through" her mind. The unsettling nature of the exchange has not been resolved, and continues to linger.

We can liken this state to one of *insomnia*, a lapse in the capacity to sleep or rest, a state of excitement and stimulation that nevertheless exhausts us, and which we cannot readily break out from, even after the events that precipitated this state have passed. Once a habit is disrupted, it is not a matter for Lucy to simply create a new one on the spot, and sink back into its comforting frame; nor is it simply a matter of letting 'time heal the wound'. A habit forms through contraction, repetition of its elements over time. In the here-and-now of disrupted routine, Lucy must improvise in order to formulate a response to that disruption, hence her reliance now on memory, on active synthesis. Once the acute phase of the crisis has passed, the disruption that it has provoked still remains. The function of Lucy's reaction is to somehow resolve the crisis, to bring to an end the disruption and, ultimately, to return to the state of *somna* that characterises the comforting routines of habit. As habit requires repetition, Lucy's first goal is to formulate a 'first step', something that can subsequently be repeated and, in time, be re-routinised, re-habituated. We can call this first step *innovation*, but this is perhaps not the glossy and exciting notion of innovation that is so often put forward as a worthy goal; rather, this is an innovation characterised by anxiety, discomfiture. It is an innovation whose purpose is resolution of a psychic disruption.

Recalling the examples in chapter 3, the three normative crises outlined – of expectation, of legitimacy, and of conduct – were all presented as having outcomes or forms of resolution that were binary in nature. "Can this be done?", Lucy asks herself as she attempts to teach a room full of uninterested engineering undergraduates how to write an academic report. 'Is this permitted?', Lucy asks herself as she advises her tutee about her research methodology. 'Is this the right thing to do?', Lucy asks herself as she considers her role in targeting a particular cohort of students for intervention. In each crisis, the path forks – if she manages to engage the engineering students she will have overcome the crisis of expectation and become the *Hero*; if she fails, she is the *Martyr*, having tried and valiantly failed. If her advice to her tutee on research methods is well

received by her and her supervisor, Lucy will see herself as an effective *Agent* for their work; if not, she will see herself as an *Interloper*, stepping into territory that she shouldn't have. And finally, if she works against the proposed interventions on the basis of an ethical stance, Lucy will see herself as the *Resistance* to a poorly thought-through policy; if she capitulates in order to maintain a comfortable relationship with her colleagues, she will see herself as a *Collaborator* in an act she does not truly believe in.

The binaries Hero/Martyr; Agent/Interloper; Resistance/Collaborator are not to be seen here as contradictory stances, or extreme positions with no middle ground; of course, there are potential outcomes that are *somewhat* heroic, where she *partially* steps over the line, where her compliance results in *marginal* resistance. Rather, these contradictory stances can be seen in part as highlighting the relationality between these two poles, for in both instances, the resolution *is resolution*, a means of moving out of a state of *insomnia* and back into state of comforting *somna*. Whichever way the path forks, both positions represent some form of transformation from excitation and discomfiture to forgetting and habit. The state of *insomnia* itself is here characterised as a *lack of resolution*, a continuation of the state of excitation – the necessity to deal with unconscious traces arising into the consciousness of reflective memory that characterises the active synthesis of time, and a continued lapse in the faculty of forgetting that would bring about a return to the passive synthesis of time. Even as martyr, interloper or collaborator, Lucy is permitted a return to *somna*, wherein these new orientations can be repeated, and thereby contracted into an habitual enframing. What Lucy seeks most to avoid is a denial of resolution, a continued state of agitation and *insomnia*, the uncertainty that results when nothing can be identified for repetition and contraction.

Let us recall the implications of *Insomnia*. Routine practice is denied – every action must be thought through, sifted and sorted. This in turn damages Lucy's self-efficacy as an effective practitioner, and drains her energy and resilience. Furthermore, no evolution of her practice is possible for she cannot contract new patterns into workable habits. Instead, she suffers an enforced stasis as she tries to make effective decisions on how to react to what continues to unfold around her unabated. She cannot simply be 'carried by the stream' of habit, but is continually buffeted by the eddying waters of circumstance, her attentions directed at the struggle to keep her head above the surface. She cannot be

absorbed in her work, instead experiencing a perpetual distancing from her actions, diverting more and more energy into seeking some form of resolution, some decision, about how she can see herself. Hero? No...Martyr, then? No... Somewhat heroic for this...for that...? No... Her indecision on her own sense of herself maintains a perpetual wakefulness to the inadequacy of her position. Such is the imperative of obtaining some sort of authorisation to return to a state of *somna*.

It's fair to say that I spent a good couple of weeks, on and off, brooding over my failed workshop on critical reading. That brooding wasn't perhaps quite as stressful as being in that class itself (and having to think on my feet in order to jolly everyone along – or liven them up), but it lingered on for ages after the fact.

Was it the material? I reviewed what I had delivered. Perhaps it was too ambitious? Could it be that a 50 minute workshop is simply an insufficient amount of time to cover the fundamentals of critical reading? A 90 minute session, maybe? With more active input from the students? But perhaps it was that particular class? I've delivered this session before and never experienced the same sense of missing the mark...maybe I did, but didn't realise it? The feedback was fine, but...what if they were just being nice? Or could it be the disparity of experience? There were a wide variety of year levels represented there – maybe I was pitching it wrong? Too basic for the postgrads, perhaps? Or too advanced for the first years? Or maybe, it was pitched at a centre ground that was absent – too basic for one group, but still too advanced for the other. Perhaps we should be more explicit about year level...offer differentiated reading sessions...

Thoughts like this kept coming to me, particularly as the time drew closer to when I was due to repeat the session – as part of our open programme of workshops, the same session was on offer again few weeks after the last one.

I discussed it with some of the colleagues in my team and their suggestions and encouragements were reassuring, but I couldn't really take on board all of what

they suggested, as I didn't get the sense that it applied to the session I'd just given. I read an article on reading issues with dyslexic students, and I sat down to revise what I was going to do in the repeat session. There was nothing I could do in the short term about the participants – by its nature, the open programme is open to all. I tweaked the sample text – I think it was perhaps too difficult last time around – and revised some of the content so as not to be too ambitious. Maybe that's the answer I was looking for? Hopefully this would wind back the session's ambition. But that just made me worry about the finalists and postgrads who might sign up.

In the intervening period my thoughts continued to go back to the upcoming session. I started to feel that the open workshop programme perhaps wasn't fit for purpose, trying to do too much for too wide an audience. But there was nothing that I could really do about that – the programme was fixed. I'd have to try my best under the circumstances.

When it came time to deliver the workshop again, I was apprehensive to say the least. It was a full house this time, over 40 students packed into the seminar room. Once again it had the usual disparity of subject disciplines and year levels. This time, however, the session went down much better. I think the timing and pacing was more in tune with what the students expected. Maybe it was the cohort last time? I don't know. It just seemed to land well, there was good engagement. Perhaps the higher numbers helped? The energy in the room? I don't know. Feedback was positive, although not much different to last time when the session didn't seem to go so well. But it felt much, much better.

Six months later, I repeated the workshop again. I wasn't quite so worried about it this time around. And it went just fine again this time. Simplifying the reading sample and winding back the ambitions of what I hoped to achieve in the 50 minutes seems to have done the trick. I'm certainly on the right track with this now, and it's a pity I was so anxious about it for so long. If only I'd been able to

hit upon the right formula sooner rather than agonising over it all. Anyway, the session seems fit for purpose now. I can put it out of my mind.

The particular examples in Lucy's practice have been chosen as they demonstrate the agency of different entities in Lucy's milieu. In the crisis of expectation, she confronts the expectations of the learners themselves, the engineering students who have been led to believe that they can be taught how to write effectively in a one hour lecture. In the crisis of legitimacy, it is the sanction of the exponents of the subject disciplines that Lucy confronts, her academic colleagues who see her role as someone outside their own domain of knowledge as having limitations with respect to elements of teaching and learning. And with the crisis of conduct, Lucy is confronting the agency of the institution to implement policies that she may or may not agree with in ethical and pedagogic terms. Whether she casts herself in the role of hero or martyr, agent or interloper, resistance or collaborator, Lucy's actions in each case are structured as responses – reactions – to the perceived or actual demands of each of these entities – learner, discipline, institution. Resolution of the crisis and the authorisation to return from a state of active *insomnia* into a state of passive *somna* is determined in all cases by recourse to the desires of another, whether it is meeting those desires, or by failing or resisting them. In this way we can say that any such authorisation depends on Lucy's domination by others.

We have characterised the first stage of this resolution as consisting of an innovation, the *novatio* of a new action or set of actions: in other words *a change*. In post-Classical Latin, *novatio* indicates the substitution of a new obligation for an old one (OED). This phrasing is appropriate in relation to Learning Development, as its identity as a set of practices has an inter-personal dimension in which actions seen as being somehow 'appropriate' to Learning Development can be usefully framed in terms of the obligation of one practitioner to another. But who can sanction such a change in practices as a resolution to the crisis at hand? What authority does Lucy herself possess to authorise any innovative action? By her own reckoning, the breaking down of routine into messy components and disconnected elements can be viewed more in terms of failure than by any kind of innovation. With her routine disrupted and broken, Lucy's state is one of agitated frailty, of potential vulnerability (subject to her capacity to respond, *riposte*). In her state of *Insomnia*, Lucy desires a return to *Somna*, even if there are moments where

that *Insomnia* is productive, even invigorating.⁴⁰ But her very particularity, her isolation from the practices of others, and an unrelenting expectation of professionalism, competence and expertise, means that a suitable authority to authorise such a return may be difficult to seek out or locate. Perhaps Lucy has a sympathetic mentor, or a respected colleague or manager to whom she can turn? Even if this were the case, their own perspectives would be seen themselves as merely representing other, particularised views, fragments alongside her own. In her more vulnerable moments what Lucy, or any other practitioner of Learning Development, desires is some kind of ‘ultimate authority’ to take the weight of expectation from her shoulders.

And that is the very nature of the Universal Picture. Its compelling feature is the authority that Lucy invests in it, for as well as generating its features, Lucy also generates its power. Compared to her own ‘shabby box of cheap tricks’, the Universal Picture of practice is, by virtue of its radical otherness, and its apparent omnipotence, a far more authoritative source of what Learning Development *should be*. It is the norm to which the normative crises would have Lucy align with. Lucy, as a practitioner, then comes to occupy a servile position with respect to her conjured Universal Picture of practice, but this abstract servility only serves to occlude and to mask the more concrete expressions of domination in the form of the ‘singularities’⁴¹ around which Learning Development gravitates, the relations around which it forms as a practice, to wit the learners themselves; the institutions they both dwell within; and the academic and professional disciplines that form the object of learning. Servility to these entities is antithetical to Lucy’s self-efficacy as a practitioner, so she posits an illusory entity to take their place, an ideal of practice, the Universal Picture of Learning Development.

Lucy’s servility is reinforced by her need for authorisation to step away from an exhausting state of active synthesis (*Insomnia*) and begin to engage once again in practices that might become re-habituated, re-contracted, and thus permit a return to a state of *Somna*. In a domain structured by representation in thinking, an effective

40 This recalls the characterisation of insomnia as a state of ‘extreme vigilance’ or wakefulness in the work of Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas suggests insomnia constitutes an openness without intentionality: “...the vigilance of insomnia is not only a watching without anything to watch, without objects; it is anonymous, so that the ego is also swept away” (Bernasconi, 1997, p. 242). My own use of the term *Insomnia* inverts this meaning – it is the state of *Somna* that sweeps away the ego; *Insomnia*, for me, is a state of active hyper-intentionality to the point of obsession with its object.

41 This term and the concepts around it will be unpacked in detail in Part Three.

strategy is to appeal to a transcendent, totalising authority. Such is the allure of a Universal Picture of practice. But as we have seen, this is merely a construct and a representation of an essence that Lucy herself has created through a process of aggregating remembered and imagined practices, albeit in a way that is externalised and de-particularised and therefore appears to exist outside and beyond her. Such a strategy may serve the purposes of constructing an authority, seemingly from without, which can sanction a return to *Somna*, but the price of such an approach is to occlude the real servility, in which Lucy has submitted herself to the authority of *another*, in a word, to permit herself and her practice to be dominated. A consequence of this servility is a growing sense of *ressentiment*, which persists even when habits are restored and practices re-embodied. This is a remainder, of sorts, a remnant that adheres to Lucy's practices whenever the move from *insomnia* to *somna* is performed.

Chapter 10: Immanent Practice

The previous two chapters have detailed the conditions of Lucy's slide into *ressentiment* – through the advent of reactivity (chapter 8), and the subsequent hunger for innovation in order to be freed from the burden of 'insomnia' (chapter 9). Deleuze seeks to characterise Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment* as being more than just a 'desire for revenge', and describes it variously as an 'inability to admire, respect or love'; 'passivity'; and the 'imputation of wrongs, the distribution of responsibilities, perpetual accusation' (Deleuze, 1986, pp. 109-111). The important point for the present discussion is that the slide into *ressentiment* for Lucy perpetually reinforces the separation of Lucy from the immanence of her own practices, and, as a consequence, perpetually reinforces the illusory authority of a transcendent Universal Picture of practice. This mutual reinforcement and strengthening of *ressentiment* in turn produces at least three effects on Lucy's continuing practice of Learning Development: a descent into nihilism; a contagion of reactivity; and, ultimately, an abrogation of responsibility. To show how these effects manifest, and to begin to seek a way out of this cycle of *ressentiment*, let us return to Lucy's practices and examine how she might respond to some of the scenarios we have already looked at.

John, the Engineering lecturer sent me an email. He'd just marked the reports for the first years.

Dear Lucy

I hope this message finds you well. I have finished marking the first year reports and thought I'd drop you a line with some observations and feedback on your session a few weeks back. Thank you very much for doing this, I'm sure many students benefited greatly from your input.

That said, there are a few things apparent from the reports I've just marked. I did notice improvements in some areas, but other fundamental problems remain in spite of your best efforts:

1. Referencing remains a big issue for many students. I know you touched on this briefly in your excellent session, but I wonder if you might consider expanding on this in next year's input? That is, if you are prepared to continue to have an input into the programme, and I do hope you will agree to.

2. Criticality. There appears to be some confusion as to what constitutes 'critical analysis'. A large number of students have simply presented the analysis undertaken by other authors in the mistaken belief that this represents their own work. Perhaps more work is needed on this?

3. Style. I want my students to write in a concise, factual way. Some of the reports did tend to waffle on a bit. I wonder if you can emphasise the need for a clearer style in the future.

All best,

John

I couldn't help but feel a little defensive about all this. I think I may have sworn, as my colleague Paul turned around and gave me a wide-eyed look. The thing is, I did warn John about the limitations of what was possible. What's the expression – 'managing expectations'? Academic writing is a complex process that can't all be 'downloaded' in a 50 minute lecture. I told him not to expect miracles. And, okay, maybe he's trying to be helpful with this feedback, but the tone of the email... Blame. I can't help but think he's blaming me in part for the shortcomings of others: "In spite of your best efforts". Is he trying to be nice with that comment? Or is there a bit of an edge to it – your efforts clearly weren't good enough? Whatever it was, it was certainly a judgement of the success – or lack thereof – of my teaching. He said there were some improvements, but what were they? It would be nice to know what had gone right rather than simply what had gone wrong. If there was any failure on my

part it was a failure to communicate the limitations of that session clearly enough to him. What does he expect? I think he's being unreasonable.

I cooled off before too long, but I couldn't help feeling somewhat deflated. What's the point of doing this kind of thing when people like John just don't listen? If I only get 50 minutes and a sack full of expectations that I can't fulfil, then there's no point, is there?

Nihilism represents a rejection of all values – “a value of nil” (Deleuze, 1986, p.139). Here Lucy perceives an accusation by the Lecturer John, and reacts with a counter-accusation (he is unreasonable; he hasn't listened to her). Having failed to obtain the mantle of 'hero' in her session for the students, John has now denied her the status of 'martyr', at least in his eyes. Furthermore, this development means that the *insomnia* Lucy is experiencing, the discomfiture of the disruption of habit, remains unresolved. What could she do? There are the beginnings of a 'riposte' in Lucy's reflection – her failure to communicate the limitations of the session clearly. John has not listened, so she must 'act her reaction' and communicate more clearly. But in the account above, there is no suggestion that Lucy will follow this course of action. Instead she broods, becomes passive, 'cools off' and 'deflates'. Instead of meeting with him again and explaining the situation from her own perspective, she instead turns her back on the situation: “what is the point?”, she asks. This is a withdrawal from the field, a rejection of her own values as much as a rejection of John. But we cannot be too harsh with Lucy. She is, after all, human. The expenditure of energy in trying to resolve her crisis and re-contract her habits through innovation (a new obligation), she has received what she takes as a rebuff, a repudiation of her own worth, her own value. So she rejects all values. This is nihilism, and this scenario is haunted by the notion that there is some 'ideal' of Learning Development in which it was indeed possible to teach students everything required in a 50 minute lecture slot. It is an ideal that perhaps that John the Lecturer adheres to, and although Lucy rejects such an ideal, she does nothing to dispel it, and a transcendent Universal Picture remains enthroned.

Far from being just a problem for Lucy herself, her growing nihilistic tendencies may result in what is, in effect, a contagion of reactivity and *ressentiment*. Let us return to Lucy's work with Vera to see how this might unfold.

Vera, the international architecture student, has come to see a TaLSS tutor in one of our regularly scheduled drop-in sessions. My TaLSS colleagues Paul and Georgia are here too, but as they are busy with other students, Vera comes to see me. We've seen each other twice before, and neither time has been particularly successful. Vera is clearly very smart and works hard, but her facility with the English language frustrates her. In our previous sessions Vera had wanted me to 'check her grammar', but I found this difficult as there were frequent serious issues with her written English. At the end of our last tutorial together (about two weeks ago) I had recommended she see colleagues in the English Language Development Centre (ELDC). Had she done this? I ask her.

She replies, curtly, that she tried to get an appointment but was told that she wasn't eligible for support. This is because she had been resident in the UK for a long time and as such she wasn't classed as an international student in terms of her fees, but instead as a home student; however, only students paying the international rates were eligible for English Language support. I hadn't realised this detail, and had assumed that Vera – who clearly needed the help of an English Language Teaching specialist – would be eligible for their support. I've got to admit that it made me feel more than a little irritated to hear that she had been refused help from the ELDC after I had recommended them to her. It seemed petty and bureaucratic, and I couldn't help telling her my thoughts. She agreed, and thought it reflected poorly on the university. I could see her getting a little angry too, and this made me realise that I didn't really want her to feel that we, as a university, had let her down. So I told her I'd help her as best I could. We then spent 15 minutes or so going over a paragraph of her work, and I gave her a few tips on what to look out for whilst proof-reading. I directed her to an online resource we had developed on grammar in the hope that she would be able to help herself that way. For all that, my sense was that she felt whatever help I was offering was only second-rate – I had told her in no uncertain terms that I was not the expert, that I was only helping her 'as best I can'. Perhaps I had let my own disappointment with the university's policies on

English language support get in the way of helping this student, of building her confidence, of making her feel supported. Our 15 minute exchange was thus cast as ‘making do’ rather than as substantive support. She left the drop-in session with an air of detachment, of resignation, not the sense of confidence that I would have liked to encourage.

Here we see the consequence of Lucy’s detachment from her own capabilities. For all the truth in the idea that there are better sources of support in the university, it was clear that those sources of support have not been forthcoming. Instead of accepting this fate, or taking some responsibility for it (for not conveying the correct information about eligibility to Vera in the first place), Lucy rails against it, and in so doing affirms in the learner not a sense of strength, of confidence, but of weakness, of being subject to the will of others. Although the learner in this case may have felt that way already, Lucy’s interaction with her did nothing to challenge it, and only furthered that sense. Looking at the interaction as a whole, we can even see this sense of ‘contagion’ of *ressentiment* working both ways – from Vera to Lucy, and then from Lucy back to Vera, a positive feedback loop between learner and the Learning Development practitioner that serves to heighten a feeling of grievance and injustice:

...hierarchy also designates the triumph of reactive forces, the contagion of reactive forces and the complex organisation which results – where the weak have conquered, where the strong are contaminated, where the slave who has not stopped being a slave prevails over the master who has stopped being one: the reign of law and of virtue (Deleuze, 1986, p. 56)

It is important to point out that in the example cited, the roles of master and slave are not fixed, natural, entities, but fluid designations contingent on actions. In one sense, Vera is the ‘weak’, the ‘slave’ (already reactive, resentful of being denied support) and Lucy the ‘strong’, the ‘master’ who is contaminated and conquered, becoming reactive herself in the process – no longer the master, but subservient to ‘the way things must be’ (that is, the law), the policies and protocols over which she feels she and Vera have no agency. In another sense, however, it is Lucy who plays the role of the weak/slave, her already nascent sense of powerlessness in the institution leading her to respond reactively to Vera’s own negativity: Vera ‘the master who has stopped being one’. We

see here the mutual reinforcement of *ressentiment* and ‘the complex organisation which results’, the relationality between Lucy-Vera, and of Lucy/Vera-Institution. But the mutuality of contagion goes further still, for we should not see the Institution as the ‘master’ to the servile assemblage of Lucy-Vera; on the contrary, the institution itself is prone to contamination by this cascade of *ressentiment*: perhaps in the form of a complaint from Vera to the university, or a public denunciation on social media, followed by a formal clarification or restatement of the university’s policy, unheard mutterings of discontent from administrators about ungrateful students, inflexible staff, insufficient funding arrangements. All the while there comes the stifled cry that there is ‘nothing that can be done’ about such arrangements, the situation being too complex for any single actor to act. All are removed from what they can do, and the ‘system’, that invisible, all-powerful, mechanism is seen to be to blame.

About a fortnight after the meeting where I’d outlined the TaLSS position on the Student Engagement project, I run into Sheila from Health Sciences, the academic who had been critical of the report I’d presented, and whom I’d failed to back up at the time – in spite of my essentially agreeing with what she had said. We chat about this and that. She’s friendly enough, and doesn’t seem to hold any particular grudge for what went on in the meeting. She doesn’t raise the topic, and we just talk about other things. Then, realising that this is my chance to clear the air, I feel I ought to tell her what has been playing on my mind ever since the meeting.

But I don’t. In all honesty, I don’t know quite how to bring it up. On the one hand, while we are speaking, I do feel a sense of shame, of having let her down, of not standing up for what I believe in. On the other hand, my thoughts are conflicted because I know there’s nothing I could have done then to really change anything, just as there’s nothing I can do now. Rita, my line manager, has made it quite clear to me that the senior management in the university had already made their minds up about the direction of the project. Nothing in our report would have changed anything, and a critical voice from TaLSS would just have been damaging for the team. But I find I can’t articulate any of this to

Sheila. I feel that if I even try to explain, I'm just going to sound like I'm making excuses. It's pointless.

So we just chit-chat for a while and take our leave. All friendly and collegiate, but I don't feel we can revisit this again. My indecision over saying something, and my inability to articulate what I feel have sort of made my decision for me. I don't feel any sense of resolution. Instead, it just feels like the circumstances have conspired to sour my professional relationship with Sheila, albeit very subtly. In not playing my cards, they have been played for me. In Sheila's eyes, no doubt, I am firmly on the side of the institution on this issue. I reconcile this nagging sense of...failure(?) with the idea that what TaLSS are trying to do as Learning Developers is to create an institutional environment that enables student engagement. The project has broader aims that are in keeping with our professional ethos, whatever my personal misgivings may be.

Finally, a further consequence of reactivity and bad conscience is that submission to its logic reaffirms Lucy's sense of 'servility' and domination by others. Lucy, in seeking to justify her own actions (and cultivating a sense of resentment towards her line manager), commits herself to a position in a 'hierarchy' of reactivity. As we have seen, the separation of force from what it can do (as Deleuze summarises Nietzsche's account of reactivity (Deleuze, 1986, p. 114)) is precipitated by the eruption of unconscious traces into the conscious mind as habits break down and the passive synthesis of time moves into an active synthesis of memory and conscious reaction. In so doing, force (in this case we could call it life-force; psychic energy; attentional energy) no longer engages directly and entirely with the unfolding plane of immanence (the world, as it happens), but is directed inward towards the excitations of the emerging traces. The resulting *insomnia* precipitates an imperative to return to habitual *somna*, which in turn requires a first step, an innovation of some kind, that can form the basis for a new contraction of habit. But any innovation is structured as a reaction to the interests of other stakeholders in higher education: learners, institutions, disciplines. Furthermore, a justification or warrant is sought for any new practice, orientation or approach, because the crises that initiate this whole process are themselves oriented around the interests of *another*. Lucy, as a practitioner, rather than seeking to interpret or negotiate a response to any crisis across the range of relations around which that crisis is structured seeks

instead to conjure up a form of practice that she considers ideal, an understanding of Learning Development that transcends the messiness of her own Particular Case of practice and encompasses the *best practices* of any and all Learning Developers. This is because a more deliberate interpretive response would necessarily be slow, difficult and complex, necessitating a prolonging of the agitated and discomfiting state of insomnia. Such is the imperative to return to a state of *somna* that any slower and less certain course of action is excluded as a viable possibility. The transcendental Universal Picture of practice is conjured instantaneously, and can be made to authorise any innovation Lucy pleases without recourse to prolonging her discomfiture. But the price of such a course of action is the remainder of *ressentiment* that accrues each time this appeal to the transcendent occurs, for such an appeal occludes the subservience of Lucy's actions to the imperatives of others, and affirms her position in the hierarchy that results:

We have the hierarchy that we deserve, we who are essentially reactive, we who take the triumphs of reaction for a transformation of action and slaves for new masters (Deleuze, 1986, p. 56).

We may consider Lucy's aversion to interpretation and negotiation and its corresponding urge to invoke a transcendental authority to itself be a form of habituated practice that can only be confronted and overcome through a crisis of its own. When hierarchies become habituated in this way, they can come to seem foundational to our life and being. Reinforced by the cycle of *ressentiment* and the slide into nihilism, such hierarchies can become exceedingly difficult to recognise, much less overturn.

The heart of Deleuze's philosophy is the moment at which our "reactivity", or "passivity" or our "sensory-motor" habits fail. They become inadequate to a certain situation and we are confronted with the necessity of becoming creative, of finding an adequate reaction to the situation at hand. It is in this failure of habit that our power of thinking, the "virtual", is awakened and creates an Idea adequate to the situation (Hughes, 2012, p. 3)

Part Two of this thesis has, through Lucy, presented an account of the practice of Learning Development as the practitioner moves through particular phases, states, or

orientations towards her work. These phases have the characteristics of a cycle, moving around and back upon itself. To summarise what I mean by this, let us begin, as ever, in the middle of things. Lucy goes about her work as a form of routinised practice, contracted habits which provide a protective enclosure which I have characterised as a state of *somna*. This state is one of immersion in her work, oriented to the present, and is characteristically unreflective. Then, as detailed in chapter 3, Lucy is confronted by a crisis in her practice which throws her back upon her heels: Can this be done? Is this permitted? Is this the right thing to do? As detailed in chapter 7 and chapter 8, this precipitates a shift in her orientation to the world – from immersion into reflection; from unconscious action to (self-)consciousness; from an orientation to the present to an orientation to the past (that is, from a passive to an active synthesis of time); from contracted habit to representation, characterised by a ‘de-contraction’ of habits. This is where the Particular Case of her own practice becomes apparent to Lucy, and its particularity is immediately contrasted with an Aggregate View of practice that Lucy formulates, based on her experiences, knowledge, and expectations. The moment she becomes aware of her own practices, they are seen as part of a set of wider practices – which Lucy recognises as such, and which are related to her own practices through an act of judgement. This shift in orientation is also a shift from one which is primarily characterised by an embodied, sensorimotor perception to a perception that must now also accommodate the eruption of ‘traces’ into consciousness, representations laid down in memory. This serves to distract, disrupt, and unsettle Lucy from her ‘enframing’ routines. This unsettled state can be creative and positive, and if Lucy is able to respond with a form of innovation, she can re-contract new habits, and her practice is able to evolve and adapt. However, this process of innovation (re-contraction of habit) requires energy, for Lucy not only has to accommodate the sensorimotor stimulus around her, but the ‘traces’ of memory re-presented to her consciousness as well. If Lucy lacks the energy, or if an innovation is not forthcoming, then the state of disruption can linger, a state I have called *insomnia*. The embodied nature of practice means that the acute phase of a crisis of normativity requires quick thinking, the expenditure of energy, and can be accompanied by physical and emotional responses – excitation, arousal, stress, shifts in mood. These effects are fleeting if an innovation can be formulated; however, in the prolonged (chronic) state of *insomnia*, the expenditure of energy can become threatening to Lucy’s self-conception, her ego (not to mention her physical and mental

health). Alongside these physiological responses there arises a growing *ressentiment*, directed both inward and outward.

The move from routine into representation, as I have outlined, initiates Lucy's sense of identity as a Learning Developer. Her Particular Case of practice, at the moment she becomes aware of it, is situated in relation to an Aggregate View of Learning Development, which rather than being actual practices, are a representation of practices generated by Lucy herself. Whereas her own practices are embodied and actualised by Lucy, the Aggregate View that she forms is *disembodied* and not tied to a particular instance of practice, but an idealised, *de-particularised* practice. In this way, Lucy moves quickly from a sense of aggregation (a collection of embodied particulars) to a sense universality – a Universal Picture of practice – disembodied, de-particularised, transcendent – and entirely illusory. More than illusory, the Universal Picture is *metaleptical*, insofar as its reality and power is invoked, generated and sustained by Lucy's anticipation of it. In conjuring this Universal Picture, Lucy obtains for herself the ultimate authority around which she might base a claim to return to her state of *somna*, and the ultimate grounds for an abdication of any responsibility that she may have for the evolution of her practices.

At the point of aggregation-disembodiment-de-particularisation, the conjuring of the Universal Picture, we have, encapsulated the mechanism of representation in thought, the moment at which we create for ourselves a fiction of the super-sensible world (Deleuze, 1986, p. 139). The power of this chimera is compelling, seemingly impossible to overthrow. But the mechanism by which it is invoked, generated, and sustained provides too the potential for its unveiling, dispelling, and banishment. It is by disrupting this moment through a second crisis to equal the first that Lucy, the practitioner, may seek to instead engage in a *riposte* to the crisis, a reinvigoration of the faculty of forgetting that will see a reinterment of the unconscious traces that so disrupt her psyche. Any such counter-disruption must somehow also break the cycle of synthesis, from passive to active, from habit to memory, and back again, Such a counter-disruption is proposed by Deleuze when he introduces his third synthesis of time – 'time out of joint', the 'dark precursor' (Deleuze, 1967; Deleuze, 2004) .

For Deleuze, the past constitutes ‘repetition for itself’, which is to say, it sets out the conditions for any given future (Deleuze, 2004, p. 117). As we have seen, the past is the domain of an active synthesis of time, which draws on memory to re-present a past which is no longer available. In addition to the mechanism of memory, we require the means to recognise what is no longer present in order that we can compare the internal representation of an object that memory provides us with the object itself.

We act by incorporating the pure past into the present (we repeat), but this generates something truly novel, the future as new. In other words, it is on the basis of the return of the past (through memory) that the future is constituted as being in excess of the present. It is thus the future that allows us to relate the past to the present (Somers-Hall, 2013a, p. 81)

Such a re-configuration of the practitioner’s response to perpetual crises of normativity necessitates an alternative model of thought to the dominant mode of representation detailed in this chapter. What is required is a short-circuiting of the habitual mechanism which continues to conjure up a Universal Picture of practice. As we have seen above, the Universal Picture constitutes a virtuality that has yet to be actualised – yet Lucy treats it like an actual entity, reifies it as such. It is this perfect entity, this representation of Learning Development, that stands in judgement of Lucy’s own imperfect practice, and the representation is given life, given a voice, and given agency by Lucy herself. In Part Three, I will outline some of the principles by which Lucy might give voice and agency to another mode of thought that precludes the need for the Universal Picture, a mode of thought that is obtained by moving in the opposite direction to its totalising tendencies.

Part Three: Towards an Idea of Learning

Development

Chapter 11: From ideal to Idea

I've been thinking about my work quite a bit lately. Sometimes it can be really fulfilling, but at other times it's so frustrating. Like any job, I suppose – there are expectations you can't quite manage, situations where you're not sure if you're overstepping the mark or not, and circumstances where you have to compromise in order to get things done. And yes, sometimes things don't go my way. I suppose one of the things that continues to bother me is not really knowing what 'my way' is, or ought to be. As a Learning Developer I have a professional community and a body of scholarship to draw on. But then I have to balance what others are doing in similar situations with what's possible within my own institution, with the often conflicting expectations and agendas of my colleagues and my managers, not to mention the students themselves. Because of the complexity of it all, I often find I can't act in an entirely rational and thought-through way. Real life just doesn't work like that. I find myself reacting to whatever situation has arisen, just getting pulled along by events without any sense of being in control. "Going with the flow" is fine to a point – there comes a time when you wonder whose 'flow' I'm going with, and sometimes it's certainly not my own. Then again, at other times, when I've thought things through a bit and have decided what I should be doing or what might be effective, I find myself having to change course significantly in order to respond to what actually happens in practice. So, I often feel a sense of powerlessness in my job and wonder what I can possibly do to feel more empowered.

In chapter 1, Lucy's particular case of practice was presented in microcosm – particular actions and thoughts on a given day. Though any other practitioner would be able to do the same, no two practitioners will engage in quite the same set of practices, or in quite

the same way. Each Particular Case is unique. I have argued that this uniqueness can be linked to the very embodiment of the practitioner: Lucy's practices are unique to Lucy. This pertains both to the uniqueness of who Lucy is, as an individual human being, and to the uniqueness of the milieu in which Lucy finds herself, though the two are closely inter-twined and are in continual dialogue.

In chapter 2, we took Lucy's particular practices and plunged into the detail of her activities and responses, her actions, reactions, and her feelings.⁴² I have tried to show that in the Particular Case, Lucy's practices are both interconnected with others, and isolated from them. Although Lucy may grasp for the 'essential' in her own practices, that is to say, what is 'essentially' Learning Development about them, the construction of such an essence requires her to enter her own particular case of practices into relation with the practices of others, resulting in an 'Aggregate View'. I have argued that this *particular* Aggregate View is only an aggregate for Lucy, the aggregator. It is her own perspective on Learning Development practice, relating what she does with what she knows or imagines others to do. As any aggregate is thereby only ever a *particular one*, the act of aggregation fails to achieve what Lucy requires of it, which is to obtain a broad warrant⁴³ for the re-contraction of habits, to authorise a particular course of action in response to whatever in her own practices has been revealed to Lucy as problematic (the so-called normative crises of expectation, legitimacy, and conduct).⁴⁴ While we do not perhaps require external validation for everything we do, the prospect of an authority beyond one's self can be appealing insofar as we may feel it adds to our own force, our own power, and we may feel such authority serves to validate our actions.

Consideration of the practices of others, however, enables Lucy to 'externalise' (or disembodify) such practices, and to 'departicularise' (or generalise) them, freeing them,

42 That is, the analysis focused on the 'psychic hydraulics' of Lucy's experience of practice.

43 By 'broad warrant' I mean the power of assent for an action that extends beyond Lucy's immediate milieu, and which, it seems to her, applies *in general and in all cases*, including her own. Such a power of assent is illusory, but may arise from Platonist assumptions. See chapter 10

44 Aggregates do other things too, such as permitting us to see connections between particulars; allowing us to have general views on things with certain common characteristics; and affording us a sense of continuity, such as when we aggregate our experiences around patterns of similarity. The claim here about the failure of aggregates (to offer a 'broad warrant') should therefore not be taken to be a wholesale rejection of aggregation as a useful process of perception or conceptualisation, but rather a rejection of the idea that aggregates are somehow *superior* to particulars in some kind of ontological hierarchy (that is, because they are somehow 'more' than particulars). As argued in chapter 10, the apparent superiority of the aggregate over the particular in Platonistic thinking is precisely what leads to the establishment of the Universal Picture (ideal form) as a kind of logos of authority.

in effect, from her own embodied limitations. These abstracted practices are unconstrained in comparison with her own embodied practices, and consequently are able to exceed her own capabilities. What Lucy does, in effect, is conjure the ‘Universal Picture’, a conception of Learning Development practices that is always superior to her own (because they are imagined and unconstrained). This induces a sense of inferiority, of inadequacy, a sense of being dominated that arises from within her. I have argued, furthermore, that in order to return to a steady-state (of *somna*, ‘habitually enframed’ and protected), Lucy must acknowledge and validate her dependence on others, a sense of being dominated from without. Lucy’s own force, her power, is removed from what she can do. Hence, the appeal to the universal, the ideal, instead of permitting her to understand her practices and to attain the ‘best’ practice, is in fact the first stage in Lucy’s journey towards *ressentiment*, and to nihilism. The ‘real’ Learning Development resides elsewhere, as a transcendent ideal to which Lucy may only aspire but can never actually attain: “the true world – unattainable”.⁴⁵

We have been discussing crises and their resolution. Certainly, from Lucy’s perspective as a practitioner of Learning Development, the disruptions to her routinised practices can be perceived by her as forms of ‘crisis’ in the common usage of the term, that is, in a largely negative sense (disastrous, stressful); but equally, we can view each crisis through the lens of the richer connotations of the word – that is, of a vital turning point, the point of judgement and decision (OED). As we have discussed, each crisis in Lucy’s practice is characterised by a shift from a passive synthesis of time (the habitual) into the active synthesis of time (the reflective), bringing activities and occurrences into Lucy’s conscious mind for deliberation. In each case, a turning point has been reached wherein Lucy feels compelled to *react*, and to do so deliberately, with deliberation, with the goal of re-contracting a series that has for her unravelled in a messy and uncomfortable way. Thus, each crisis marks the moment when Lucy’s practices are called into question and set before her gaze in order that she may come to some judgement.⁴⁶ What the term crisis occludes somewhat in all of this is the notion that there may be a moment prior to that wherein the crisis in Lucy’s practices are formed as representations. In other words, the crisis is not the first moment of its own

45 From Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols*: (‘How the “true world” at last became a myth’)(Nietzsche, 1997, p. 24).

46 With all the resulting cascading of transcendent thinking and ensuing *ressentiment* as detailed in Part Two

manifestation, but instead is a subsequent reaction to that first moment, a moment that exists prior to representation. Crisis is the act of deliberation itself, but it only occurs as a response (reaction) to something else. If we are to free ourselves somewhat from the restrictions of Platonist thinking as Nietzsche and Deleuze urge,⁴⁷ then we require some way of thinking about that something else.

The first step in doing so is to consider that, in a crisis of this kind, something has *actually* happened: Lucy is presenting a lecture and her preparations and preconceptions about what would happen confront the apparent apathy and lack of interest of the students sitting in front of her (as in the crisis of expectation); a tutee asks Lucy about her research methodology, and Lucy considers as she does so what the student's supervisor would think of her offering advice (as in the crisis of legitimacy); Lucy hears about plans for a scheme that, she realises then and there, goes against her deeply-held beliefs regarding her own practices (as in the crisis of conduct). As discussed previously, Lucy's very embodiment as a human being means that these crises result from a convergence of factors that play out in the here and now. In Deleuze's terminology (adapted from Bergson)⁴⁸, each of these embodied occurrences is a form of *actualisation*, wherein things occur in the material realm, in space and time. Following this line of thinking, these occurrences don't simply come out of nowhere.

In chapter 6 the distinction between the actual and the virtual as it pertains to Lucy's practice was discussed in the context of routine practices and the formation of habits. For Deleuze (as for Bergson), the activities and occurrences in the material world, things that actually happen, are not the only facet of what constitutes reality. For idealists, the world of the real and the manifest reflects a transcendent domain, the realm of Platonic forms, or an unmanifest Godhead. Such a dimension (certainly in the Christian conception) represents the domain of the Perfect, with material imperfection emanating downwards.⁴⁹ The counterpart to this way of thinking, and diametrically

47 "Nietzsche was right when he treated the eternal return as his own vertiginous idea, an idea nourished only by esoteric Dionysian sources, ignored or repressed by Platonism" (Deleuze, 1990, p. 264). Here we see how Deleuze shares Nietzsche's disavowal of the repressive nature of Platonic thought as against the inherent (albeit chaotic) Dionysian aspect of human nature.

48 See Maras (1998) for a full discussion of the concept of actualisation in Bergson's work.

49 We see this for example in the gnostic conceptions of divine Sophia and the *pleroma*, emanations moving from pure and perfect form into the realm of substance, getting heavier and degrading as it does so. This neo-platonist conception of ideal forms is perhaps more intellectual, but remains fixed in notions of transcendence and manifestation, with what is 'real' distinct from what is

opposed to it, can be found in what we might term ‘crude naturalism’, which situates the whole of reality in the material nature of the world. Ideas, mental representations, thoughts and concepts are considered mere epiphenomena of this materiality. This view may be familiar to us from the sciences, and it pervades our ‘common sense’ of the world in contemporary Western societies.

When seeking to make sense of the virtual, it may be useful to clarify how this can be achieved, and what ‘sense’ we are attempting to make. In chapter 6, we characterised this virtual domain as being distinct from the actual, which we can understand as the material world of our sensory comprehension: a world of sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touch. This world of actuality is the world of the physical embodiment, matter and substance. Such a world can be said to be ‘extensive’ in the sense that it is characterised by a material extension in space. While not all that is actualised is material (for example, an emotion, as when Lucy feels frustrated), all phenomena that is non-material (like our emotions) can *only* manifest by means of the material (Lucy herself is required for Lucy’s emotions to become actualised): Mental phenomena (like emotions, although arguably these have a bio-chemical basis) require an embodied mind. This is closer to the position of material naturalism than it is to idealism.

I have been careful to show how the natural world is not the only aspect of ‘reality’, and that there subsists around the actual a field of virtuality that constitutes the extents and limitations of what it is possible to actualise in any given moment. I have also been careful to show that such a virtual domain does not exist as a transcendent realm beyond the actual, but is inherent and immanent to what is actually manifest, which in turn alters the composition of the virtual domain. Describing the virtual and the actual, and distinguishing these two features of reality in this way is problematic insofar as we are given to spatial metaphors when trying to do so. For example, I have just used the phrase ‘subsists around’ when characterising the relation of the virtual to the actual, invoking an invisible miasma or field (like a magnetic field) that somehow haunts⁵⁰ the

‘ideal’. Implicit in this way of thinking is the notion of that reality is essentially hierarchical, a way of thinking that endured beyond the renaissance and into the likes of Hegel (See Lorenc in Tarde, 2012, p. 82 n.19).

50 Derrida insists that the real is never just the present moment, that the non-present ‘haunts’ it: “To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology. Ontology opposes it only in a movement of exorcism. Ontology is a conjuration” (Derrida, 2006, p. 202). In French, ontology/hauntology are homophones. The ontology of

sensible physical realm, but a narrow interpretation of this as being somehow ‘supernatural’ is potentially misleading. On the contrary, the virtual is integral to the natural world. When discussing the virtual we need to couch our thinking in a different way.

DeLanda provides a clear example of virtuality as it pertains to the actual in terms of affects (DeLanda, 2011c). He describes the way we can understand a knife. This knife has the capacity to cut – it has been manufactured from tempered steel and the blade has been sharpened. If it was taken from a kitchen drawer or a butcher’s block and used to chop meat or vegetables, that capacity to cut would be actualised – the meat and the vegetables would be rendered asunder by the action of hand and blade., and this slicing capacity would affect the physical domain of the actual (in the form of chopped meat and vegetables) In this way we can say that a virtual property of the knife – the capacity to cut – has been be actualised. DeLanda makes the point, however, that such a knife might not be employed in such a way. Perhaps it remains in the drawer or butcher’s block for the duration of its existence without ever being used to cut anything at all. The capacity for the knife to cut would, in this case, never be actualised. Even so, the knife retains this capacity all the while – it is a virtual property of the knife that, while never actualised, is still *real*. If we were so inclined, we could find the knife and use it to cut at any time. The virtual persists (and is part of the reality of Lucy’s kitchen).

We might take the knife and instead of using it to cut anything, find some way of dulling the blade so that it no longer has the capacity to cut. This blunt knife remains largely unchanged – it still looks the same at a distance. Perhaps it might be used as an ornament, or for ceremonial purposes rather than as a cutting tool. Nevertheless, the physical changes to the *actual* knife has altered its *virtual* properties. It no longer has the capacity to cut. In this way, changes in the domain of the actual have an effect on the virtual domain.

DeLanda makes another important point with this example. The virtual properties of the knife can be characterised in part by the *capacity to cut*. This capacity depends on the existence of something that the knife is capable of cutting – in our example the meat or

the virtual can be read as a kind of hauntology. Later discussion of the concept of the *event* in chapter 12 and chapter 16 conceives of the actual in a way as being haunted by its virtuality.

vegetables. In this way we can see that the virtual consists of the capacity to affect (e.g. cut) something, which implies and indeed *necessitates*⁵¹ the capacity of that something to be affected (that is, to be cut). If there was nothing that *actually* exists that could be cut by the knife, this relationship between the knife and the things-that-can-be-cut-by-it breaks down. This is what happens when we dull the blade. The knife retains some of its capacities (to look knife-like; to frighten and intimidate; to symbolise what knives symbolise and so on) and may also gain new capacities (for example, to be useful – and safe – as a stage prop), but one of its capacities has been removed. We might argue on this basis that the item before us is no longer a knife but is something that is ‘knife-like’. Such a case could be made if we argued that the *essential* quality of a knife is its capacity to cut – remove that capacity and the object is no longer a knife, merely knife-like.

We may use DeLanda’s example in the setting of the university in order to see how the virtual-actual distinction informs our understanding of the practices of Learning Development, and how we can begin to make sense of how virtuality structures the actual in the setting of higher education. If we consider the capacity to cut to be an essential property of a knife, then we must consider what we might consider to be the comparably ‘essential’ properties of the various elements of higher education. An objection to this move arises when we consider the relative simplicity of a material object like a knife as compared to the multifarious complexity of the practice of teaching in higher education.⁵² There is no doubt that this constitutes a conceptual leap, for the complexities of practice, and the capacities inherent to the practitioners are arguably of a different order to that of a simple object. Let us proceed then as if by analogy, to enable this way of thinking to inform how we can think of the virtual, and of the role of capacities, in the complex domain of the Learning Developer.

Let us commence with the learner themselves. When Lucy is face-to-face with her student in a tutorial setting, there is an assumption in that arrangement that the student-as-learner possesses a *capacity to learn*. In order to be *actualised*, this virtual capacity of the learner requires in Lucy the *capacity to teach*. We may thus view any learning

51 The event of cutting is thus a ‘double event’ involving the capacity to cut of one entity (the knife) being brought into relation with the capacity to be cut of another entity (the meat and vegetables). See (DeLanda, 2011a).

52 Or indeed *any* practice.

that occurs in Lucy's tutorial with her student to be a bringing-into-relation of these two virtual capacities, an event that enables (but cannot guarantee) the actualisation of learning. Now we may consider these relational capacities (to learn, to teach) to constitute the virtual structure of learning in this particular setting, the tutorial room. Each participant (Lucy, the student) assumes the other possesses the complementary capacity to the one they themselves exhibit. Why should this be the case? Why would Lucy and the student hold such an assumption in their coming together? The answer lies in the setting in which their interaction takes place, the spatio-temporal domain of the higher educational institution. There exists in this setting, then, a further virtuality, the *capacity to enable teaching and learning*⁵³. That is to say, the institution itself possesses this capacity. The corresponding capacity in both Lucy and her student would be the *capacity to be enabled (to learn, to teach)*. Once again, possession of this complementary capacity draws the virtual into a relation that results in some form of actualisation. Occupying a certain space at a certain time (say, a booked tutorial session) is an expression of this capacity, and whatever *actually* occurs in that space and at that time constitutes the material form that the *virtualities have structured*.

There is a further dimension at play here, and that corresponds with the object of learning itself – what is learned? What is taught? Most obviously, this is constituted by the formal curriculum – the various bodies of knowledge that the institutions enable the teaching and learning of, and which the learner seeks to learn, and teacher teach. Any body of knowledge must perforce possess its own set of complementary capacities (or assumptions thereof) – the *capacity to know*, and the corresponding *capacity to be known*. Such knowledge may extend to procedural (knowing how) as well as propositional knowledge (knowing that),⁵⁴ but in either case it is this expert knowledge that, in higher education, remains the domain of the academic and professional disciplines.

Thus, when we meet Lucy and her student in the tutorial room (it is Eleanor, the nursing student doing her dissertation from chapter 4), we have compressed into that singular

53 A university as an institution has other capacities, of course, such as the capacity to extract fees, the capacity to facilitate research, the capacity to build a new library, and so on. We are focusing here on the capacity which connects it most immediately to the capacities of the learner and the teacher.

54 Ryle (1945)

location in space and time a range of intersecting capacities. At the most immediate scale, Eleanor and Lucy bring with them respectively the *capacity to learn* and the *capacity to teach*; the institutional setting itself in which their interaction takes place expresses a *capacity to enable teaching and learning*, and requires from Eleanor and Lucy the *capacity to be enabled*; and at the broadest scale, we have a body of knowledge in the form of nursing practice and the academic expression of such practices, all of which have the *capacity to be known* by Eleanor and by Lucy, who in turn possess the *capacity to know*.

This, at least, is the picture we can paint when all goes well. We can easily envisage a situation when one or more of these capacity pairings fails to cohere into an entirely complementary pattern and the virtualities of one or another element are unable to be actualised, or at least fully actualised. For ‘capacity pairings’ and ‘virtualities’, we may choose instead to use Deleuze’s term *affects*, which he draws from his interpretation of Spinoza (Deleuze, 1988, pp. 48-51). In Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, the various ‘elements’ of higher education that I have hitherto identified – learner, institutions, disciplines – can be seen as ‘modes’, each constituting an element or facet of the broader picture⁵⁵ of higher education. Deleuze puts it as follows:

An existing mode is defined by a certain capacity for being affected... When it encounters another mode, it can happen that this other mode is “good” for it, that is, enters into composition with it, or on the contrary, decomposes it and is “bad” for it. In the first case, the existing mode passes to a greater perfection; in the second case, to a lesser perfection. Accordingly, it will be said that its power of acting or force of existing increases or diminishes, since the power of the other mode is added to it, or on the contrary is withdrawn from it, immobilising and restraining it. The passage to a greater perfection, or the increase in power of acting, is called an affect, or feeling, of *joy*; the passage to a lesser perfection or the diminution of the power of acting is called *sadness*. Thus the power of acting varies according to external causes for the same capacity for being affected. (Deleuze, 1988, pp. 50-51).

55 Which is to claim that we cannot form a concept of higher education without recourse to its various constituent modes (Deleuze, 1988, p. 108). The complex interrelation of these modes such as I am only beginning to outline here might be thought of, in one form or another, as the essential ‘attributes’ of higher education (Deleuze, 1988, pp. 51-52).

This formulation permits us to consider what happens when the various capacities that constitute the ‘virtual’ of Lucy and Eleanor’s tutorial are in some way complementary (‘entering into composition’ with each other) or not (‘decomposing’ each other). For example, if Eleanor does not possess the capacity to learn, then Lucy cannot express the capacity to teach her (and vice-versa); if, at a particular point in time, the institution does not possess the capacity to enable learning and teaching, then Eleanor and Lucy cannot express the corresponding capacity to be enabled (to learn or to teach). We might see this if the booking system failed, for example, or if the tutorial room was unavailable due to a leak in the roof. Finally, if the object of knowledge (the content of subject discipline) does not have the capacity to be known (if it is obscure, contradictory, or elusive), then neither Lucy nor Eleanor will be able to express the capacity to know; conversely, if Lucy or Eleanor do not possess the capacity to know something, then that subject cannot express the capacity to be known *by them, at that time*. This latter clarification is crucial, for it must be pointed out that what we are discussing here are *particular cases*, not generalities (aggregates or universals). If Eleanor – at the time and in the place of the tutorial – does not have the capacity to learn something, then Lucy cannot actualise her virtual capacity to teach that thing to Eleanor *there and then*. It does not mean that Lucy cannot ever teach that thing to her (perhaps at a different point in time, or in a different setting), or that Lucy couldn’t teach the same sort of thing (in our example from chapter 4, the application of research methods) if a different student was sitting across the desk from her. As Deleuze makes clear, the compatibility of modes are matters of mutual reinforcement or mutual diminution, and have a bearing on how much force can be expressed in any situation. Here we can see echoes of the Nietzschean formulation of force and action (chapter 8).

The shift in language that we see in this discussion of the virtual in terms of affects and modes is one from the *properties* of things (what it has, what it possesses) to one where the emphasis is now on the *capacities* of things to affect and be affected by other things (what it can do). Whereas a property of something can be reduced to an essence that can be conceived of as being transcendental and removed from our experience or a component of its identity (what it *is*), capacities place the emphasis instead on the relation of one thing to another based on our immanent experience of them. Thus, if we talk of the virtual properties of something, we do not refer to something that it

possesses, but rather something that it is capable of exhibiting or expressing when brought into relation with another thing.

In chapter 4 of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze summarises his concept of the Idea as follows:

Ideas are by no means essences. In so far as they are the objects of Ideas, problems belong on the side of events, affections, or accidents rather than on that of theorematic essences. Ideas are developed in the auxiliaries and the adjunct fields by which their synthetic power is measured. Consequently, the domain of Ideas is that of the inessential (Deleuze, 2004, p. 236).

If we are to understand a set of practices such as Learning Development as an Idea, then, we must rid ourselves of the notion that what we are attempting to do is grasp its essential features as we might with any Universal Picture. Such a view pre-supposes a systemic structure around which the world is organised. Rather, we wish to look more closely at the way these practices arise in the Particular Case, and what shapes and directs them (that is their force, their power) as *events*.⁵⁶ To ‘make sense’ of Learning Development practices, we must not broaden out our view to the general and the universal in a search for over-arching structures, but must instead *look deeper into the particular* and how it can come to manifest as an actuality, as an event.

Deleuze remarks:

Sense depends on the distinction and distribution of the brilliant points in the Idea... a multiplicity which must be traversed in two directions. From the point of view of differential relations; and from the point of view of the distribution of singularities which correspond to certain values in these relations (Deleuze, 1967a, p. 584).

56 The term *event* has a technical usage for Deleuze, derived in part from his reading of Whitehead (Deleuze, 1993, p. 76). It refers to the way the actual manifests from the virtual. Shaviro (2009, p. 22) summarises the concept thus: “Every event thus culminates in a “stubborn matter of fact” ... a state of affairs that has no potential left, and that cannot be otherwise than it is. An event consists precisely in this movement from potentiality (and indeterminacy) into actuality (and complete determination). The concept can therefore be viewed as a close companion to the concepts of virtuality/actuality.

Here we see another term that Deleuze uses to elaborate on his concept of the Idea: *multiplicity*, and a related term *singularity*. These are difficult concepts to define with any clarity in isolation from one another, but it may be helpful to think of a multiplicity as consisting of the way things in the world come into relation with one another, and singularities as discernible points within those relations. What is key to the usefulness of the term multiplicity in relation to Learning Development is that, unlike essences, ‘multiplicities give form to processes, not to the final product’ (DeLanda 2002, p. 14). So whereas the essence of something represents that entity as being somehow ‘complete’, corresponding to an ideal or typological (categorical) form, an entity conceived as a multiplicity is capable of a variety of manifestations or end-states, and may take numerous forms that on the surface appear divergent from one another, but which are linked (or structured) at a more fundamental level than the actual form itself. In this way, essences are said to be ‘clear and distinct’ – they are defined and differentiated from one another (distinct) in ways that are sharply delineated (clear); multiplicities, on the other hand are said to be ‘distinct and obscure’ – they are also differentiated from one another (distinct), but in a way that permits the generation of new forms that are hitherto unknown (obscure). Multiplicities are thus more open-ended than essences, which is to say they are contingent on the forces and processes that form them. As DeLanda puts it, essences are always abstract and general entities; multiplicities are ‘concrete universals’ – always having a distinct (concrete) form, but one which may have a multitude of different manifestations.

An important term used in understanding multiplicity is that of a *singularity*:

Singularities are turning points and points of inflection; bottlenecks, knots, foyers, and centers; points of fusion, condensation, and boiling; points of tears and joy, sickness and health, hope and anxiety, “sensitive points”...[the singularity] is essentially pre-individual, non-personal, and a-conceptual...it is not “ordinary”: the singular point is opposed to the ordinary...to reverse Platonism is first and foremost to remove essences and to substitute events in their place, as jets of singularities (Deleuze, 1990, pp. 52-53).

‘Jets of singularities’ may at first sound imprecise or poetic, however the word ‘Jet’ in French has the additional connotation of something that is thrown. This brings to mind the Heideggerian notion of ‘thrown-ness’ (*Gerworfenheit*), which refers to how we find ourselves in the world emerging from a past in a manner that is beyond our control, and emerging into a future in which we do possess a degree of agency (Heidegger, 1962). It is possible that Deleuze had this concept in mind here. In English the word ‘jets’ additionally conveys the dynamism of the Idea, as opposed to the static nature of the Platonic understanding of essences as stable and transcendent forms. On the contrary, for Deleuze the living world consists of a continual extrusion of inter-relating elements, and the singularities are the discernible points in what would otherwise appear chaotic. Furthermore, singularities are not just the resulting elements of this dynamic reality, but the identifiable conditions through which that reality manifests:

Singularities...characterise processes independently of their particular physical mechanisms...the production of a soap bubble is quite different to [that of] a salt crystal, yet both are minimising processes (DeLanda, 2002, p. 8).

Here DeLanda is pointing out that two physical entities – a soap bubble and a salt crystal – appear to be wholly different from one another in appearance, materiality, chemical composition, physical characteristics, and so on. They appear to have entirely different ‘essences’. However, they are formed in their different physical and chemical manifestations by the same underlying process – a soap bubble forms as a sphere in order to minimise its surface tension; a salt crystal forms into a cube by minimising its bonding energy. Both mechanisms are ‘minimising processes’, as DeLanda puts it, and although very different in terms of the material phenomena that result, are driven by the same underlying principle (the *tendency* to minimise surface tension/bonding energy under certain material conditions), resulting in a spherical bubble and a cubic crystal respectively. This tendency links these disparate physical phenomena together as part of the same multiplicity. At the same time, the mechanism that underlies the two processes are independent from each other. Multiplicities are characterised by this so-called ‘mechanism independence’, or universality. In summary, DeLanda characterises the relation of ‘multiplicity’ and ‘singularity’ in Deleuze’s ontology as follows:

A multiplicity is defined by distributions of singularities, defining tendencies in a process (DeLanda, 2002, p. 19).

To apply the concepts and give them a concrete form, we may say that in the present setting the ‘process’ which we are examining is the development of student Learning Development in the context of UK higher education – Lucy’s workplace, her role, the activities she undertakes, her actions and reactions. If we are to consider Lucy’s practices in that role and in that setting as a ‘multiplicity’, then we can say that Learning Development is ‘defined by distributions of singularities’ which are the ‘defining tendencies’ inherent to the higher education setting. We may then formulate the question to answer as: in Learning Development, what are these singularities? Or, put the other way, what are the ‘tendencies’ that Learning Development exhibits? To determine and examine these tendencies, these singularities, is to examine Learning Development in a ‘mechanism independent’ way; that is, to determine the ‘universalities’ of such practices without recourse to generalisation or the need for a transcendent ‘form’ of Learning Development.

Before we can begin to respond to this question of singularities and tendencies in Learning Development, let us summarise where this discussion has led. This chapter began with a recap of certain relevant chapters from the foregoing two parts of the thesis, and highlighted the uniqueness of Lucy’s practices of Learning Development in the Particular Case. We then turned to the manner and mechanisms whereby Lucy relates her own practice to the practices of others, formulating an Aggregate View, which in turn elides into a Universal Picture of practice. This, and the consequent slide into the projection of essences and ideal forms was the subject of Part Two. From this point comes the call to find a way of making sense of the practice of Learning Development that avoids the potential pitfalls of representation and judgement in thinking, and noted that crisis itself, as it pertains to Lucy’s practices, is a reaction to what has actually happened, and that, following Deleuze, there must be a state prior to the formation of this reaction, a space between the sensing and the making of sense. Likewise, there exists a state prior to the emergence of actual events, the *virtual*. There followed a discussion of the relation of the actual to the virtual, expressed in terms of relational capacities, which we then drew back to Lucy’s situation by way of illustration. The context of Lucy’s practices were then formulated in terms of affective

relations, moving away from attempts to distinguish the essential properties of things (the Platonic ideal) towards what Deleuze characterises as the *Idea*. The Idea of Learning Development, it was suggested, consists of an understanding that is founded not upon the discovery of essential properties, but rather of *what gives form to processes*, and the forces that shape these processes and the states they tend towards.

Chapter 12: The method of dramatisation

People sometimes ask me: “What is Learning Development?”. “Learning developers support student learning in the university” is my usual ‘one-liner’ response, but this could realistically apply to just about anyone working in a university! Academic staff do this. So do librarians. So do the cleaners, actually. So I usually find it necessary to follow any pithy attempt at defining it with examples of what I actually do myself: “I see students in tutorials and help them to write their essays”, or: “I work with lecturers in different subjects to help their students better cope with academic requirements”. The example I use, and the level of detail I go into, depends on who I’m talking to. It’s quite difficult sometimes to mark out what is distinctive about Learning Development, as opposed to other roles within the university, and quite often I have to distinguish what Learning Development is by talking about what it isn’t: “I’m not based in one particular department, but work with students across the university” or “we are focused on student learning rather than supporting staff teaching...although we do that as well”. It often ends up sounding quite vague, but I suppose it shows that what is really meaningful to me in terms of trying to understand Learning Development are the specifics of my own practice. Broad definitions don’t really get to the heart of what I do. Also, trying to describe what I do to others really highlights how Learning Development is all about relating to different people in different roles – students, lecturers, the university itself.

Lucy is perplexed. She is struggling to determine what is distinctive about her role as a Learning Developer. Much of what she does is also done by others, and she reports having to resort to defining Learning Development not by what it is, but by what it isn’t. In *The method of dramatisation*, a paper presented to the Société Française de Philosophie in January 1967, Deleuze seeks to problematise the fundamental question “What is?”. This is a question, Deleuze argues, concerned with essences: not ‘who is beautiful?’ but ‘*what is* the beautiful?’ (Deleuze, 1967, p. 91), and such a formulation of

enquiry frames an *Idea* of something (in this case beauty) in terms of the *Ideal*⁵⁷, an understanding which is abstracted from any particular instance. Deleuze refers here to the dialectical method of Hegel, a means of understanding only the ‘empty and abstract essence’, a method driven by a process of contradiction (p. 92). Thus, we might obtain our understanding of ‘the beautiful’, the abstract essence of beauty, through a dialectical process of contradiction: ‘it is this, not that’. To contra-dict is to speak against, to elevate one possibility of understanding and then seek to negate the others, until only the truth of the matter remains.

As we have seen (chapter 9), the Universal Picture of Lucy’s Learning Development practices is similarly obtained through a dialectical process of contradiction, of negation: a negation of Lucy’s own practices, and, in a sense, her own self. The Universal Picture ‘speaks against’ the Particular Case: ‘Those practices (out there), not these practices (in here)’, and it is Lucy (and we ourselves as practitioners) that gives it speech. That the Universal Picture triumphs and comes to dominate the Particular Case can be seen as a syllogistic given: If the set of all possible practices is complete and comprehensive (that is, all practices that are possible – the Universal Picture), and Lucy’s own practices are incomplete and limited (in that she cannot do everything – the Particular Case); then Lucy’s own practices are inferior in the sense that they can only ever be something less than everything. It is difficult to deny the validity of the second premise – the lived experience of the practitioner is one punctuated by crisis and doubt, where habitual enframing is continually ‘stripped away and a state of *insomnia* induced (chapter 9). But Deleuze’s approach throws into doubt the validity of the first premise, for if we follow his thinking we come to understand that there can be no ‘set of all possible practices’ in any meaningful way. For Deleuze (as for Nietzsche) such a construction is a form of Platonism, that is to say, a method of thinking that is abstract and removed from any *actual* manifestation, an ideal of the essence that can never be *actually* comprehended. You can never answer the question ‘what is’ when you are seeking to equate an actual practice (the Particular Case) with ‘all possible practices’

57 Although Deleuze does not discuss it in his paper (as it was presented in French and later translated), in English the use of the definite article (‘the’; ‘the beautiful’) in the translation is instructive as it shows us that, by means of the ‘what is’, any sense of a thing must be unitary, definable, and, as it must be knowable in all instances, abstract.

(the Universal Picture).⁵⁸ Thus, the question ‘what is’ is deemed by Deleuze to be ‘confused and dubious’ (p. 91). Instead, he moves in the opposite direction:

A quite different procedure (the outline of which is found in the philosophy of Leibniz) must be wholly distinguished from contradiction: in this case, it is the inessential which comprehends the essential, and which comprehends it only *in the case* (Deleuze, 1967, p. 92. Emphasis in the original)

That quite different procedure is what Deleuze refers to as ‘vice-diction’. While contradiction ‘speaks against’, vice-diction ‘speaks alongside’. Deleuze describes the procedure of vice-diction as follows:

The traversal of the “ground” as populated by relations and singularities, the constitution of individual essences which flows on from this, the subsequent determination of qualities and extensions, form the whole of a method of vice-diction, which constitutes a theory of multiplicities and which always consists in subsuming “under the case” (Deleuze, 1967, p. 587).

Here Deleuze is offering us a way to approach our thinking that moves away from assumptions of transcendent essences and all that they entail, and it is this approach that concerns us from this moment forward. Deleuze’s concept is densely summarised in the quote above, and needs to be carefully unpacked in order for us to be clear about how it can be used in the present thesis. To start at the end of the quote, we are dealing here with a theory of multiplicities (the concept outlined above in chapter 11) and are examining such multiplicities by focusing on individual instances of their manifestation. The utility to Lucy’s practice should be clear – here we have an approach to thinking about her work that does not commence with an assumption that the ‘out there’ (Aggregate View, Universal Picture) is somehow superior or more important to understanding than the ‘in here’ (Particular Case). Instead we take the Particular Case as our starting point, and ‘traverse the ground’, examining its actual manifestation,

58 This objection goes back at least as far as the work of Giordano Bruno. From his *De l’infinito universe e mondi* (1584):

Philotheo: No corporeal sense can perceive the infinite. None of our senses can be expected to furnish this conclusion; for the infinite cannot be the object of sense-perception; therefore he who demanded to obtain this knowledge through the senses is like unto one who would desire to see with his eyes both substance and essence (cited by Koyré, 1957, p. 45)

focusing our attention in particular upon the singularities (as outlined in chapter 11 – the ‘non-ordinary points’ which are discernible and of interest to us) and the way phenomena relate to one another – how they are connected, and the nature of that connection. For Deleuze, this mechanism – the interconnection and relation of singular points in the manifest world – is the precursor to the formation of what we experience as ‘essences’. The emphasis here is on the *formation* as an unfolding process and not the *form* as a fixed entity. Once we have examined the singularities and relations inherent in any instance of particularity (that is, perceiving that particular thing as a multiplicity), the next step is to consider how those singularities and relations can come to form actual things in the world (expressed here as ‘qualities and extensions’).

To go into more depth on what is meant here, we can consider the two ‘stages’ of vice-diction as outlined in *Difference and Repetition*. To quote Deleuze at length:

The problem of thought is tied not to essences but to the evaluation of what is important and what is not, to the distribution of singular and regular, distinctive and ordinary points, which takes place entirely with the inessential or within the description of a multiplicity, in relation to the ideal events which constitute the conditions of a “problem”. To have an Idea means no more than this, and erroneousness or stupidity is defined above all by its perpetual confusion with regard to the important and the unimportant, the ordinary and the singular. It is vice-diction which engenders cases, on the basis of auxiliaries and adjuncts. It presides over the distribution of distinctive points within the Idea; it decides the manner in which a series must be continued, from one singular point among regular points up to which other; it determines whether the series obtained within the Idea are convergent or divergent (there are therefore singularities which are themselves ordinary because of the convergence of the series and singularities which are distinctive because of their divergence). Vice-diction has two procedures which intervene both in the determination of conditions of the problem and in the correlative genesis of cases of solution: these are, in the first case, the *specification of adjunct fields* and, in the second, the *condensation of singularities*. On the one hand, in the progressive determination of the conditions, we must in effect discover the adjunct’s which complete the initial field of the problem as such – in other words, the varieties of the

multiplicity in all its dimensions, the fragments of ideal future or past events which, by the same token, render the problem solvable; and we must establish the modality in which these enclose or are connected with the initial field (Deleuze, 2004, pp. 238-239).

The first component ('adjunction') seeks to set out the varieties of the multiplicity in all its dimensions (that is to say, identifying the singularities – important points – and their relations), while the second component ('condensation') seeks to show how the singularities are made manifest (actualised; or differentiated, with a 'c'). Hence, as a procedure, vice-diction acknowledges the manifold nature of the world (that is, it is conceived as a multiplicity), and focuses its attention on *how things can come to be* rather than on what they currently are.

A concept closely related to vice-diction (almost used as a synonym) is outlined in *The Logic of Sense* under the term 'counter-actualisation' (Bogue, 2012, p. 9), which Deleuze attributes to the 'actor', one who does not play a character as such (an isolated individual), but 'a theme (the complex theme or sense) constituted by the components of the event, that is, by communicating singularities effectively liberated from the limits of individuals and persons' (Deleuze, 1990, p. 150). There is a strong sense in Deleuze's account of the way the actor embodies the immanent over the transcendent: "...there is an actor's paradox; the actor maintains himself in the instant in order to act out something perpetually anticipated and delayed, hoped for and recalled" (Deleuze, 1990, p. 150). Here we see in the actor not the charlatan or artificer, the one who falsely represents him or herself by wearing a mask, but rather one who 'acts' in the Nietzschean sense of the word, one who acts their reaction, offers a riposte to the event, is equal to it; rather being one who re-acts to the event and in so doing risks becoming consumed with *ressentiment*.

Bogue (2012) emphasises the crucial notion that vice-diction consists of our acting in the present moment, permitting us to engage 'the virtual events immanent within one's present world' (p. 9). He points out that it is only in moments of disequilibrium that we can become aware of the movement of the virtual into the actual. He suggests that "the specification of adjunct fields...requires an outward exploration of the virtual networks of multiple connections that come together in each present moment, as well as a critique

of our representations of that present moment' (p. 9). This in turn involves: 'undoing conventional representations of our situation' and 'teasing out the proliferating interconnections among self-differentiating differences that are enveloped in this particular moment of disequilibrium' (Bogue, 2012, p. 9).

The second, complementary process of vice-diction, Bogue suggests, the so-called "condensation of singularities" consists in our conducting 'experiments on the real' (Bogue 2012, p. 10). Alluding to Nietzsche's dice throw (see 2.1 above), he suggests the first movement, the specification of adjunct fields, consists of the first throw, whereby we seek to understand and accept the world as it has unfolded. The second moment, then: 'involves a reconfiguration of singularities as we make of ourselves and our situation a second dice throw' (Bogue 2012, p. 10). Thus, our aim is not simply to understand the world as it presents itself to us, but to transform it. That is not to say that we do not accept the outcome of the first throw and seek to replay the game until we win, for that is what leads to *ressentiment*; rather, the second throw here represents the *riposte*, acting one's reaction. What makes it different is the presence of the first movement, the specification of adjunct fields. We seek to take control of our fate by first accepting it as our own and embracing it (*amor fati*), not passively but actively, as something we can continue to shape. Bogue expresses this as a dual act of first exploring connections in the field of the virtual, and then re-forming them. Deleuze links this process (or strategy) of counter-actualisation with Nietzsche's concept of the Eternal Return:

Counter-actualizing each event, the actor-dancer extracts the pure event which communicates with all the others and returns to itself through all the others, and with all the others. She makes of the disjunction a synthesis which affirms the disjunct as such and makes each series resonate inside the other (Deleuze, 1990, pp. 178-179).

To understand this, think back to Lucy and her 'normative crises': "Can this be done? Is this permitted? Is this the right thing to do?". These are moments of disjunction in the 'event' of her practice. Such disruptions to habit are not emblematic of failure, or a falling short of a fixed ideal of practice, but can instead be seen, through affirmation, as instances alongside other such instances – a 'series' – which when taken together reveal

a harmonic tension in Lucy's practice which 'resonate'. In other words, these 'crises' reveal something of what structures Learning Development practices in her particular case, that is, an *Idea* of Learning Development. Ideas are taken to be 'events' or accidents, not the essences of things in themselves; they are structured in a *particular* way due to the interplay of their elements in the virtual, but they are not fixed in their virtuality, and are always subject to evolutionary change as the composition of the virtual is affected by what is actualised. An Idea may have an essence at a particular juncture, but what is 'essential' in any actual configuration is an emergent feature of the virtual. To focus on what we take to be the essence of a thing is to miss what has formed that essence, and this is the function of vice-diction. Deleuze explains it as follows:

The procedures of vice-diction cannot, therefore, be expressed in terms of representation, even infinite: as we saw with Leibniz, , they thereby lose their principal power, that of affirming divergence or decentring. In fact, the Idea is not the element of knowledge but that of an infinite "learning", which is of a different nature to knowledge. For learning evolves entirely in the comprehension of problems as such, in the apprehension and condensation of singularities and in the composition of ideal events and bodies (Deleuze, 2004, p. 241).

Knowledge (of the actual, and the essence of the actual) obtained entirely by reflection and representation is inherently limited in its purview. The processes of contra-diction ("it is this, not that") from which we may ascertain the identity of a thing through comparison and resemblances cannot help us to understand or make sense of the structures that give rise to those essences, and which help sustain or may destroy them in turn. Such is the purpose of vice-diction. Infinite learning in the sense that Deleuze uses it here refers to an immanent engagement with the perpetually unfolding, rather than an eternal, transcendent knowing. An understanding of learning as an aspect of 'the problem' underpins this claim.

In his commentary on *Difference and Repetition*, Somers-Hall also emphasises the connection in that key text between the strategies of vice-diction and learning and the relation of ideas to problems, pointing out that in Deleuze's understanding, Ideas are needed in order for us to learn (Somers-Hall, 2013a, p. 155). Deleuze sets out two

accounts of learning (learning to swim, learning a language, both of which derive from Bergson – Somers-Hal, 2013a, p. 156). The accounts that Deleuze sets out are contrasted with an understanding of learning that we derive from Plato and Descartes. Deductive reasoning, he argues, merely serves to validate the premises that we assumed to be true in any case. While this is a strength in terms of fostering a degree of clarity, it remains a weakness insofar as it cannot achieve any more than this. Vice-diction is a means to ‘escape the deductive sterility of the proposition’. Somers-Hall summarises Deleuze’s intentions as follows:

Deleuze’s rather abstract analysis of the process of learning to swim or learning a language is that we do so by ‘composing the singular points of one’s own body or one’s own language with those of another shape or element, which tears us apart but also propels us into a hitherto unknown or unheard-of world of problems’ (Somers-Hall 2013, p. 156).

Vice-diction, then, serves to dwell with the particular (actual) in order to delve into the actual’s genesis.

The first stage of vice-diction is therefore that of finding other relevant cases that together specify the problem we are faced with....By ‘discovering the adjuncts’ Deleuze means this procedure of finding equivalent cases that emerge from the problem. As the Idea is an interpenetrative multiplicity, these elements must be combined to generate the Idea corresponding to the problem...Once we have an Idea of the problem, we can attempt to find those singular points of the Idea where it engenders solutions that are different from the present state of affairs (Somers-Hall, 2013, p. 156)

Somers-Hall goes on to note that although the language Deleuze uses refers to problems and solutions, to knowledge and learning, his conception of these terms is much broader than we might typically expect. An organism, for example, is a solution to a problem of existence in a given environment (Somers-Hall, 2013, p. 157). We can offer a further reading of ‘solution’ here, in the sense of a solution being the dissolved liquid form of a thing, which is to say that it possesses a degree of fluidity rather than a solidity. This

feeds into an understanding of the Idea as being *unresolved* – open, and capable of change.

It is tempting in this formulation summarised by Somers-Hall to see in ‘discovering the adjuncts’ and ‘finding equivalent cases’ a call to engage in a form of aggregation, to collect Particular Cases and line them up in order to ascertain their common features via an Aggregate View. However, we must recall that Bogue’s interpretation calls for us rather to focus our attentions *within* the Particular Case in our search for the adjuncts which are, by definition (OED) ‘associated, connected; joined, added; subordinate, [and/or] supplementary’ fields which constitute that Particular Case. The adjuncts to be discovered and the equivalent cases to be found all pertain to elements or relations within each particular: It is their interconnection and inter-relation that constitute the Particular Case as such, and their convergence in a spatio-temporal sense which permits us to think of it as being distinct.

These various accounts and interpretations of vice-diction seem to exemplify the procedure itself. While we may initially have sought the ‘essence’ of the concept, what it ‘really means’, all we can hope to do is set out particular instances whereby vice-diction is subjected to an interpretation (the so-called ‘adjunct fields’) and derive an Idea of it from those particulars, the problem they share. We also see a mirror in our initial procedure of aggregation in Part One (chapter 4): how many instances of interpretation are enough to capture the essential features? The answer lies not in terms of quantity and how these interpretations ‘represent’ the Idea, but in how the qualities of those interpretations can be brought to bear on the problem they highlight.

In short, representation and knowledge are modelled entirely upon propositions of consciousness which designate cases of solution, but those propositions by themselves give a completely inaccurate notion of the instance which engenders them as cases, and by which they resolve or conclude (Deleuze, 2004, p. 241).

Deleuze continues:

By contrast, the Idea and “learning” express that extra-propositional or sub-representative problematic insistence: the presentation of the unconscious, not the representation of consciousness (Deleuze, DR, p. 241)

For our understanding of Learning Development, then, what we are seeking to attain is not its essence, but an understanding of how it is constructed at the virtual level such that certain features can be actualised through particular practices. As we have seen, we can begin to apprehend the virtual through a process of counter-actualisation from those particular practices, and the first stage of vice-diction is to lay down different instances of those practices – ‘the varieties of the multiplicity in all its dimensions’ (Deleuze, 2004, p. 239). As we explored in chapter 6, those particular practices are, for the most part, routinised and habitual. That is to say, they are largely unconscious. Bogue has emphasised that it is in those moments of disequilibrium (‘drama’) that the singularities which characterise a practice become apparent. The upshot, methodologically speaking, is that it is to these singularities that we must now turn our attention. By unpicking them and highlighting the relations inherent in each, we can begin to see how the unconscious presents itself in instances of practice. That is the purpose of the two sections which follow. This section will end with an account of how those relations can be considered in terms of their structure – in other words, how we can begin to make sense of them, with an exploration of these relations – ‘playing with reality’.

Chapter 13: Sensing and Sense-making

An important part of making sense of Learning Development for me is to think about how my practices ‘in the moment’ contrast with the way I think about them after the fact. When I reflect back on what I’ve actually done, I often can’t help but think I could have done things better; but that makes me think: why didn’t I do something different at the time? In other words, when I step back to judge my own actions, the ‘hindsight’ view can often seem superior to the view ‘in the moment’. This isn’t always the case, I suppose, but then I tend not to dwell on things that have gone well. As such I often find myself adopting a defensive stance in relation to my own practices, trying to justify my own actions and decisions – to myself – after the fact. It does make me wonder, though: does the ultimate arbiter of success (or otherwise) always reside in hindsight? Or is it possible that my practices ‘in the moment’ are not quite as bad as I think they are? Perhaps it’s a matter of considering why I pay attention to some things and not others?

How do we perceive a singularity? How do we perceive and consider relation? These questions constitute the first part of vice-diction detailed above. In the following section I argue that such questions amount to *how we make sense of the world*. The discussion I present here considers how ‘making sense’ consists of two entangled operations – the sensing (perception) and the sense-making (cognition). I draw on the philosophy of Lucretius and the Epicureans, and on contemporary currents in neuroscience to make the case that perception and cognition are in fact inseparable aspects of a unified process. Deleuze himself has strong sympathies with elements of Epicurian philosophy (Bennett 2013), and was himself deeply engaged with currents in scientific thinking (Moore, 2011, p543), so although the juxtaposition of ancient philosophy and contemporary neuroscience may perhaps seem strange at first, such a synthesis might be considered quintessentially ‘Deleuzean’.

The notion that perception (sensing) and cognition (sense-making) are inseparable leads into a discussion of how we can begin to consider the inter-relation of the internal/external domains (broadly, the subjective and the objective) in terms of *traces*

and *signs*. The aim is to obtain methodological clarity and consider how Lucy can undertake vice-diction's call to 'specify the adjunct fields'. Let us commence by coming to our senses.

There are physical limits on our sensory perception, and these limits in turn shape what we are capable of thinking. The use of the term 'shape' here is chosen carefully, for perceptual limits do not necessarily limit what we capable of conceptualising. One set of physical limits on perception we can understand as extrinsic, external. They concern the material world in its manifestation, what we consider to be the laws of nature: the speed of light, the behaviour of material objects in relation to one another, the chemical composition of material things, and so on. Hence we cannot perceive with our senses anything that cannot exist materially. These conditions of materiality itself are independent of our senses and exist prior to any sensing. The other set of physical limits can be understood as intrinsic, internal, deriving from the features of our own physical embodiment. So the wavelengths of light we are able to absorb and process, the frequencies of sound, the receptors on our tongues, in our noses, and on our skin all set thresholds at which we will or will not perceive a stimulus from our environment. Hence we cannot directly see ultraviolet light or perceive sounds below 20Hz or above 20kHz, though these material conditions exist extrinsically. These extrinsic and intrinsic perceptual limitations govern what we can engage with in the material world from an immediate sensory standpoint. But in addition to *sensing* things directly we are of course able to *make sense of things* indirectly, through our faculties for reasoning, abstraction, and imagination.⁵⁹ There emerges from this line of thinking a suggestion that perception and conception (thought) are distinct and separate domains of engagement with the world that somehow interact or intersect with one another, perception being how the outside gets in, and thinking being what happens inside our minds. In the following section I will argue that perception and conception are in fact a continuum of our experience⁶⁰ and that their apparent separation is illusory.

59 In French *sens* has the additional connotation of 'direction', and we can link the idea of sense conceptually with the ideas of 'jets of singularities' and of 'thrown-ness' discussed in chapter 11. Our sense of something is that which gives us an idea of direction, of trajectory, and is thereby a dynamic concept.

60 This is, in effect, an argument for 'univocity', in defence of a realist stance.

Perception and cognition are not equivalent. Although our perceptions have certain thresholds, and although these thresholds influence the way we think and what we think about, the realm of what it is possible for us to *understand in thought* surpasses the realm of that which we can perceive through our senses. We can only perceive what is actual, but we can think about things that have no actuality. We can conjure up and imagine things we have never perceived before, and things that cannot even be perceived. Our imagination surpasses what is actually perceptible. We can perceive a man; and we can perceive a horse, and we can think of these actual entities in any given particular manifestation. But we can also think of imaginary men, and imaginary horses, entities that we have not actually perceived for ourselves. Indeed, we can also splice the features of these two entities together to form the image of a centaur, an imaginary being that has never had any actuality⁶¹.

How can we think what we cannot perceive? Lucretius and the Epicureans⁶² wrestled with the relation between our perceptions and our thoughts, with Lucretius proposing that actual material objects emanate ‘films’, ‘sprayed and scattered in all directions (Lucretius, 1994, §241, p. 101) which we in turn perceive through our senses⁶³. More or less, for Lucretius is conscious that this idea is open to challenge due to our frequent mis-perception, or partial perception with respect to the world around us, and much of the fourth book of *De rerum natura* is devoted to puzzling over various scenarios where sensory perception fails us.

Lucretius claims that we can perceive things that are not there. One important example of this are dreams – which bring thoughts to our mind without direct perception. Dreams are dealt with at length (§964-1037), but are only one facet of our experience where perceptions are not directly sensory in origin, with Lucretius concluding:

61 To the best of our knowledge.

62 Deleuze has an affinity with Epicurean thought, and the thinking of Lucretius in the analysis which follows is broadly compatible with a realist Deleuzian ontology. See (Bennett, 2013) for a detailed analysis of Epicureanism and Deleuze.

63 A theory of simulacra. This also recalls Hume and the contraction of habit, as outlined in chapter 2:

‘the imagination operates like a ‘sensitive plate’ in order to develop a qualitative impression of the AB relation, rather than the quantitative relation of understanding which relies on storing a sequence of prior moments’ (Somers-Hall DDR, p. 6)

This in turn echoes dual process theories and the idea of anticipation through association, of which more later in this section

We have many other paradoxical experiences of the same kind, all of which seem bent on shaking our faith in the senses. But all to no purpose. Most of this illusion is due to the mental assumptions that we ourselves superimpose, so that things not perceived by the senses pass for perceptions. There is nothing harder than to separate the plain facts from the questionable interpretations promptly imposed on them by the mind (Lucretius, 1994, p. 107).

For Lucretius, perception and thought are inexorably linked together, with thought (mind) a form of internal perception (thoughts, dreams, all *pass* for perceptions) derived from the contents of our sensory engagement with the world (dreams, for example, are for Lucretius to be constituted primarily from what has been occupying us during our waking hours (p. 120)). Lucretius considers the mind to be a physical, embodied function, not a transcendental entity separated from the body:

So mind cannot exist apart from a body and from the man himself who is, as it were, a vessel for it – or if you choose you may picture it as something still more intimately linked, since body clings to mind by close ties (§552-555, p. 80)

The key implication of this Epicurean idea that I wish to focus on here is that *whatever we think of* has a reality, whether it is ‘really’ (that is, *actually*) there or not, and that this reality is, fundamentally, embodied and perceptual. In this view, that which we can think about or consider in *thought* is subsumed into the idea of *perception*, and is secondary to it (derivative of it): Thought (mind) is a form of perception (or a form that perception takes when it occurs within the body), not a separate domain of activity⁶⁴. Perception and cognition are not equivalent – what we can conceive in our minds is a *form* of perception, an embodied form. It is important here to distinguish the idea of perception-as-reflection (a perception that I am consciously aware of, what Whitehead refers to as *apperception* (Sherburne, 1981) from a notion of perception taken more broadly to mean anything that is absorbed by the sensory apparatus (that is, *sensed*), alongside anything that prefigures and structures any apperceptive activity in the mind (in the process of *sense-making*). In other words, when I am aware of (and when I

64 The two – thought and perception – are one, interlocked with each other. This is an argument against idealism, for the contents of the mind are, in this view, contingent on the (material) contents of the world.

perceive it) a thought, I can call it that; however, we may have (apperceptive) 'thoughts' that we are not aware of, and it follows that these too may be subject to sense-making, even as we remain unaware that this sense-making is even taking place. Into this category of thinking-perceiving we can situate the domain of *intuition*, engagement with which forms an integral component of actualisation (Bergson, 1991, p. 66)

The Epicurean view, then, (or at least the view of Lucretius) is that our thinking derives from our sensory perceptions, and is in fact a form of embodied perception. But the converse is also the case: our perceptions are influenced in some way by our thoughts. Indeed, as we have seen above, 'There is nothing harder than to separate the plain facts from the questionable interpretations promptly imposed on them by the mind'. Here Lucretius is referring to the paradoxes of our perception, but we may take this as a general principle of his realist ontology: The 'bare facts' about the world are perpetually confounded by the 'questionable interpretations' imposed on them by the embodied mind.

One strand of contemporary cognitive neuroscience bears out this Lucretian complaint.⁶⁵ So-called Categorical Perception (CP) is the idea that our sensory perception is influenced by the categories that we have formed in our minds. The clearest illustration of this effect is in the visual perception of a rainbow. When white light is broken up into the colour spectrum through the prism of a raindrop, all wavelengths of visible light are perceptible; however, when a human being sees the resulting refraction, our perception favours distinct bands of colour – what we know as the rainbow (Goldstone and Hendrickson, 2009, p. 69). In other words, the bands of colour that we see as a rainbow is a product of our understanding of a continuum of refracted light as comprising distinct categories (colours).⁶⁶ This is not simply a by-

65 In the present and subsequent sections dealing with cognitive neuroscience (Categorical Perception, and then Fuzzy Trace Theory), the reader will detect a shift in the tone of the writing. In particular, in these sections I wanted to highlight the extant research evidence for the claims I am making, and consequently the writing reflects this 'evidenced based' tenor of writing, with its 'factual, objective' slant. This was not necessarily a deliberate strategy, but emerged unconsciously in the process of writing. I considered adjusting the tone to match the more philosophical approach that predominates in this part of the thesis, but decided against this in favour of preserving the original form of expression, perhaps illustrating the persistence of habit in academic practices. In this case, a habit of written expression that comes to the fore unbidden when dealing with a particular discourse.

66 The case of the colour indigo is instructive. Apparently added as a seventh colour by Newton in order that the 'primary' colours map across to the seven-note harmonic scale, the acceptance of indigo as a 'primary' colour has not been uncontroversial (see Ronchi and Sanford, 2009, p. 51). The debate

product of visual processing only – the same phenomenon is observed in phoneme (sound) recognition in language acquisition (Goldstone and Hendrickson 2009; Livingston, Andrews and Harnad, 1998). In these cases, it has been suggested that the categories that govern our perception are innate (Livingstone, Andrews and Harnad 1998, p. 733). However, the same phenomenon has been observed in facial recognition, both in terms of teaching experimental subjects to recognise particular categories (Livingstone, Andrews and Harnad 1998; Goldstone, Lippa and Shiffrin, 2001), and in terms of longer-standing cultural biases in identifying certain facial expressions with particular emotions (Jack, 2013).

Specifically, categorical perception creates the perceptual illusion that *within* category items are more similar than *between* category items, even when the physical difference between exemplars is equal (Jack 2013, p. 1263. Emphasis mine).

In other words, once categories have been established (innately or learned), our perceptual apparatus is biased towards accepting and amplifying those categorical distinctions.

More generally, the existence of CP makes the theoretically important point that people organize their world into categories that, in turn, alter the appearance of this perceived world (Goldstone and Hendrickson 2009, p. 75)

Between Lucretius and the work of contemporary neuroscientists we can discern a way of looking at the relation between perception and cognition, between sensing and sense-making, that blurs the apparent boundaries between the ‘external, objective’ material world and the ‘internal, subjective’ mental domain. On the one hand we have the idea that sensory perception and cognition are not distinct domains of activity, but are in effect a continuum, with our cognitive functioning effectively an embodied form of perception. In this way, the apparently external world is in fact an internal function of the embodied mind: not in the idealist sense whereby we seek to explain the external

around the status of indigo underscores the tensions inherent in any distinction between objective externalities and the subjective internal.

world as an epiphenomenon of our internal mental one, but in the realist sense that our thoughts are part of our *perceptual* architecture. Something of the ‘outside’ thereby resides ‘within’.

On the other hand, we have the notion that our internal perceptual architecture influences that which we perceive from external stimuli. Not in the sense that we somehow ‘objectively’ alter what we are perceiving, but rather in that our sensory faculties impose limits on how we can perceive phenomena and, as a consequence, our judgement of the objective world is invisibly influenced by categories that are not only hard-wired or innate (as with colour perception and phoneme recognition), but also learned (as with facial recognition). As a result, we do not perceive any of these qualities as *originating from within us*, the perceiver, but as inherent qualities *of the world itself*. In this sense, something of the ‘inside’ thereby resides (or is seen to reside) ‘without’.

Having established a connection between perception and cognition it is possible to take this line of analysis a step further and draw a connection between perception, cognition and judgement. Traditionally psychologists have made a clear distinction between lower order and higher order cognitive learning, distinguishing between perceptual learning and learning that involves our more advanced cognitive functions (Goldstone, 1998, pp. 586-587). According to this understanding, perceptual learning concerns our more basic, fundamental perceptual faculties, our sensory apparatus and how it adapts to its environment. As Goldstone recounts, controlling for the distinction between ‘earlier’ (perceptual) and ‘later’ (higher cognitive) functions experimentally presents numerous challenges for researchers in this field, with strong evidence to suggest that perceptual learning is implicated in changes in the strengthening and weakening of associations (Goldstone 1998, p. 586). We can see in this work an assumption that there is such a distinction between lower and higher order cognition, but a blurring of that presumed boundary in experimental evidence. The distinction between lower and higher is also explicitly linked with a kind of embodied temporality in the characterisation of earlier and later functions to create a lower/earlier vs higher/later distinction, structured around a metaphor of circuitry. The conventional model for understanding perception, memory formation, and judgement is based on this assumption of serial processing: We perceive a sensory stimulus, the details of which form ‘verbatim representations’ of that stimuli.

From this sense-data higher cognitive functions then construct a schema or representation of what we have perceived, storing this information as schematic memory. Judgement and decision-making is then made on the basis of this higher cognitive functioning.

Another contemporary current in cognitive neuroscience, Fuzzy Trace⁶⁷ Theory, challenges this model. Fuzzy Trace Theory attempts to locate a mechanism for intuition, and it proposes that rather than serial processing from raw sensory details into schematic summaries, the brain undergoes a parallel processing whereby verbatim⁶⁸ representations are encoded *simultaneously* with so-called ‘gist representations’, which are then stored in separate, parallel neural systems. A detailed and extensive review of the evidence on the subject by (Reyna, 2012) claims that Fuzzy Trace Theory overcomes a number of the problems associated with other dual processing theories, and – to date – has stood up to experimental scrutiny (see Table 1 in Reyna 2012, p. 341). According to the theory, advanced cognition relies on rapid gist-based intuition (perception of ‘wholes’) rather than on the serial construction of patterns and forms from perceptual detail (perception of ‘parts’). While both forms of processing (verbatim and gist) improve with maturation, the verbatim-based systems develop earlier and tend to be relied upon by adolescents and younger subjects. Gist-based representation improves with age and experience and is also increasingly subject to framing effects, whereby the values of the subject introduce biases in the way decision-making scenarios are posed. Experiments have also shown that experts rely on gist-based reasoning to make decisions even where verbatim data are available, meaning their judgements are quicker and more accurate. By contrast, novices concentrate on the verbatim representations, and their judgments are slower and (perhaps paradoxically) *less* accurate. Adults generally have been shown to hold a preference for this kind of ‘fuzzy processing’ over verbatim (detail-focused) processing. Generally speaking, the capacity to consciously remember something (verbatim memory) does not influence the quality of the judgements that are made (gist-memory). Rather than being a primitive

67 Coming as it does from the empirical epistemological backdrop of cognitive neuroscience, the ‘Trace’ in Fuzzy Trace Theory is not used in the precise sense that Freud or Nietzsche are using it (or indeed the way Levinas or Derrida develop the concept). Reyna evokes Descartes and Freud to demonstrate the ‘standard view’ of the separation of higher and lower order cognition (Reyna 2012, p. 340), but these strands are not developed further in her review.

68 ‘Verbatim’ is used analogically in Fuzzy Trace Theory, meaning ‘word for word’, which is to say in precise detail. It does not directly refer to language or the spoken word.

cognitive function as advanced by more traditional theories of cognition, Fuzzy Trace Theory suggests that intuition and gist-formation are a higher level function of cognition. Most important for the present thesis is the notion that intuition/gist-formation is strongly linked with the construction of meaning for the subject (Reyna 2012, p. 342), that is to say, with *sense-making*.

This line of research and its conclusions from experimental data has clear resonances with Gestalt psychology. Indeed, Reyna makes it clear that the development of Fuzzy Trace Theory derives in no small part from the Gestalists, building upon this theoretical ground in spite of having some important differences:

For instance, gestalt theorists mounted devastating criticisms of association theories that remain relevant to such theories today. However, gestalt theory incorporated nativist assumptions and lacked the concept of retrieval cuing; these and many other features distinguish gestalt theory from fuzzy-trace theory, despite embracing the former's distinction between nonproductive (associative) and productive thought (Reyna 2012, pp. 338-339).

Fuzzy Trace Theory and the idea of parallel cognitive processing (the simultaneous processing of both detail and gist) adds to the overall picture in the present thesis by emphasising the fact that judgement need not be considered solely the domain of reflective thought, but occurs equally in the non-reflective domain, the domain of habit, of the unconscious. The division between higher and lower mental functioning, between perception and cognition, is shown here to be too simplistic. The idea that we perceive the world in terms of verbatim detail, then construct a representation on that basis is undercut by the notion that we snap to judgements all the time, based on our prior experiences. Our sense-making appears to be as much intuitive⁶⁹ as it is reflective and rational. Looked at another way, this current of research reformulates how we think of 'representation' and 'judgement', ascribing to intuition some of the functions associated with 'higher reasoning'. I don't consider this a rebuttal of Deleuze's critique of representation; instead, it can be seen as a vindication of his stance insofar as the 'gist' is seen to surpass the 'verbatim' in terms of what is represented, particularly in the case

69 'Intuition is that sympathetic attitude to reality without us that makes us seem to enter into it, to be one with it, to live it' (Wildon-Carr, 1911, p. 45), in discussing Bergson's understanding of intuition.

of expert knowledge. What we have here is an affirmation of the immanent: The distinction between perception and cognition, between sensing and sense-making, between the internal and the external, is reduced further still.⁷⁰

What is the significance of considering perception and cognition as a mutually implicated continuum in this way? In the present analysis, the key point to make is that the interplay between sensing (perception) and sense-making (cognition) helps us to consider the practices of Lucy in terms other than that of an isolated subject interacting with an objective material domain. Indeed, it calls into question the entire *endoxa* of subject/object with respect to human experience, a division between the internal subject and the external objects that they interact with in the material world. In this conception, Lucy is inevitably separated from her practices by the very nature of practice itself, understood in terms of an internal process (Lucy's sense of her own Learning Development practices) responding to an external stimulus (for example, the various 'normative crises' outlined in chapter 3). This picture relies on a concept of reflective representation, an inbuilt distancing between Lucy and what she does as a Learning Developer. Instead, we are, I hope, beginning to establish a picture of Lucy's practice in which the interior and exterior domains can themselves be understood as a continuum, in perpetual exchange, each structuring and shaping the other. In this view, as inside/outside becomes blurred together, the various 'separations' (between action and thought; between perception and cognition; between habit and reflection) can begin to be seen for what they are – categorical imperatives that, through their very logic of separation and disconnection, enshrine an ideal of transcendence over and above all else. In the place of that pernicious ideal we can start, alongside Deleuze, to think in terms of an *Idea* that is constituted immanently as the interplay *between* these categories of separation, an entanglement or *implication*.

70 At this point the 'scientific' section ends, and the tone of the writing should no longer jar so much.

Chapter 14: The specification of adjunct fields

Perhaps it is all a matter of perspective, of negotiating different perspectives. A student working on an assignment has particular needs – they want to pass, to do well. And they bring with them their own personal history, levels of knowledge and experience, and so on, that is different for every student. So that's complex enough to begin with. But then you have the student's lecturers in the mix as well – the ones that actually set and mark the assignment. They have a different perspective – they require the student to meet certain professional or discipline-related expectations as well, so we have to navigate all of that too. And that same assignment is also viewed in a different way by those in the university at a distance from the process – academic managers who can only ever see it in abstract terms – pass rates, compatibility with quality standards, credit load. From their perspective, the individual experience of the students can become a distant thing, and our activity as Learning Developers can likewise be reduced to our function in increasing attainment or decreasing attrition rates. So the more students we see the better, and that has a knock on effect in terms of our resource planning and reporting. All of these relations, all of this complexity, comes into play in anything we do, and we have to feel our way forward from our own perspective with a certain degree of empathy for other perspectives as well. But there are limits to what I can take in. I can't know and understand everything about what a student wants or needs, what a lecturer wants or needs, or what the university wants or needs. My perspective is limited, and I can only ever see part of the picture, and I can't be expected to remember everything, at all times. I am not a machine. Perhaps an important aspect of Learning Development is the process of discerning what is important from what is not, becoming sensitive to what a particular situation requires, and being able to respond to that situation intuitively, without having to stop and think about it. In other words, to become a living part of my own Learning Development practices, not a distant observer of them.

Lucy is here grappling with the complexity of her work as a Learning Developer, grappling with the limitations inherent to her embodied perspective; grappling with her awareness of the perspective, interests and power of those around her. We need to help her find a way to come to an *Idea of Learning Development* as discussed in chapter 11. Chapter 12 provided the method – of dramatisation, vice-diction; and chapter 13 situated this method in a broader context of sensing and sense-making. What remains is to commence with the method, through undertaking the first of its two procedures. The reader may find the present chapter is quite dense in terms of its theorising as we seek to come to terms with one of Deleuze’s highly abstract concepts and apply it to the concrete example of Learning Development. As such, the following precis of the argument is offered to help frame the discussion at the outset and guide the reader through the dense theorising that will follow. All technical terms referred to here (in italics) will be drawn out and explained over the course of the chapter:

- Virtuality is open and creative, and structures the actual (chapter 11);
- Sensing and making sense of the world (chapter 13) implicates us immanently in the world, and what is present and absent in what we perceive and think about our world can be thought of in terms of *traces* (chapter 8);
- When traces become significant to us – that is, they are seen to have meaning, as so-called *singularities* (chapter 11), we can think of them as *signs*;
- Sense-making (and learning), can be seen to be an engagement with signs, an immanent entanglement or implication with the world;
- The so-called ‘structure’ of the world conceived as *virtuality-trace-singularity-sign* can be thought of as being *topological*, that is to say, as consisting of essential shapes and structures that do not derive or refer to any force or influence that is external to it, but on ‘local information’ (deriving from the particular). It can therefore be thought of as immanent rather than transcendent;
- We can think of this ‘topological’ idea of the world as a *manifold*, consisting of *degrees of freedom* (that which can be changed); and ‘remarkable’ or singular points of significance (singularities), to which forces of relation tend towards (*tendencies*).
- When the singularities in a manifold express such tendencies, we can think of them as *universal singularities*. The so-called ‘normative crises’ outlined in Part One of the thesis are examples of universal singularities

- Such a ‘manifold’ conception of the world in turn permits us to explore just what Deleuze means by the ‘specification of adjunct fields’ in relation to Learning Development.

This precis itself runs the risk of being overly convoluted and complex, but I ask the reader’s forbearance and patience as each thread of the argument is teased out and woven together. Let us commence, then, with the ‘specification of adjunct fields’ as it relates to the concept of the virtual.

As Bogue summarises it, the first procedure in vice-diction, the ‘specification of adjunct fields’ requires:

...an outward exploration of the virtual networks of multiple connections that come together in each present moment, as well as a critique of our representations of that present moment...The process of specifying adjunct fields consists of connecting singularities and thereby exploring the expanding surface of that infinite plane (Bogue, 2012, pp. 9-10).

As we saw from the discussion of the virtual in chapter 11, virtuality constitutes a property of the real, structuring what can become actual. The virtual properties of actual things correspond with their capacities to affect and be affected, which manifest through relations. What is actualised then constitutes a renewed set of virtualities, which in turn shape what can be actualised subsequently. Hence, we can come to form a view of the world that is open-ended, created and creative, and capable of evolution and change. Vice-diction’s first movement, then, consists in becoming aware of how ‘the present moment’ is constituted by these ‘virtual networks of multiple connections’, alongside an ongoing critique (or interpretation) of the way we come to understand the way our present is structured. We proceed by noticing how the things that capture our interest (singularities) come to intersect with one another, and it is this interconnectedness that permits us to come to an understanding of the way those things can continue to manifest in the way that they have been, or if they might be subject to change. The present chapter draws together two currents in Deleuze’s philosophy of the virtual that help us to understand the virtual networks that constitute Lucy’s Learning Development practices, the *sign*, relating sensing to sense-making and learning; and the *topological*, which permits us to consider the underlying structure of Learning Development – that

is, to understand what we mean by ‘the surface of that infinite plane’ in the quote from Bogue, above. This will permit us to consider Lucy’s Learning Development practices as a network of signs that leave traces across an immanent, dynamic field of action, rather than as a set of fixed predicates corresponding to transcendental categories – the first part of vice-diction.

In chapter 13 we considered Lucy as a Learning Developer, making sense of her practices. We discussed the way perception (sensing) and cognition (sense-making) are inexorably linked as a process of implication with the world. In so doing, we have been continually brought back to the space between what is outside and what is inside, to the conscious and the unconscious, by what is present and then absent, connected by what Nietzsche, via Freud, calls ‘trace’ (see chapter 8). The trace is formed from something that is perceptible in outline even though it is not (or is no longer) present. We perceive something lying beneath the world, behind it, or in some other way removed from it, and we seek to give it form in the present. Sometimes what we are confident in what we trace, seeing clearly what is behind the present, as when we see thick lines behind the thin paper; at other times we are less sure as what is apparent to us remains indistinct. Hence on occasion we fill in the gaps, make connections we are unsure of, fudge it in order to complete the picture. Where did it come from, this present for us? Here it is, now fully formed. From whence did it originate? We answer: we saw something just below the surface, now clear, now faint, and we traced its outline as best we could and this is what we now have, this present. It is to us an imperfect representation of the obscure original, but it is distinct in itself. That is the purpose of our work, to render the half-hidden and obscure lines and patterns distinct. To offer another, complementary, image of the trace, we might consider footprints upon snow. These footprints are not a trace of something below the surface, but of *impressions made upon* a surface. They have a solidity of their own, they provide us with a sense of the trajectory of a series of impacts, a direction of travel. The trace that remains is an inversion of that which left it behind, a negative image formed from an impact and a subsequent removal. What is common to both images – the tracing of lines beneath paper, the tracing of footprints upon snow – is the lingering presence of an absence, the sense that something has somehow altered, or is no longer perceptible or otherwise accessible to us in the form that it originally took.

The trace is what is left when something has been removed. The materiality of our world is the remainder when virtualities have been given form and only the actual stands before us. What was here once? It is unclear, but this is what remains to us now. Do these traces not possess a virtuality of their own? Of course, but we cannot see them when we look. These traces themselves will be removed, leaving traces of their own. Does this not imply a running down, a degradation? Well it would were these traces not renewed and reinvigorated by the very act of our noticing them. It is our attention that rekindles the life of traces, that precipitates an activation. This too we cannot perceive, for it is always there for us, a background crackle and hum that we do not notice for its ubiquity. It seems the world itself is full of life. But what a strange thing that it should be so full of our own life! Uncanny, that when I enter a room, the traces I perceive there correspond with my own interests. What fortuitous coincidence! But of course, these traces are but one selection enacted by my own living self. Something has been removed, leaving only traces; but then I enter, and something is then added. And always, to us, a stability and a continuity. It may tempt us to think, then, that all the world is inert until we enter into relation with it. But of course life is everywhere, and dynamisms abound – but not always our own life, nor our own drama. Those we perceive and conceive are unique to our own movements and moments, the work of our lives, our life's work. Significance, meaning, sense, derives from our engagement with the world, during which we continually determine the remarkable from the ordinary, the singularities from the substrate, the figure from the field. All traces, then, both forgotten and recovered, are intensities, perturbations, singularities – signs:

“In a fine analysis of Nietzsche, Klossowski interprets the “sign” as the trace of a fluctuation, of an intensity, and “sense” as the movement by which intensity aims at itself in aiming at the other, modifies itself in modifying the other, and returns finally onto its own trace. The dissolved self opens up to a series of roles, since it gives rise to an intensity which already comprehends difference in itself, the unequal in itself, and which penetrates all others, across and within multiple bodies. There is always another breath in my breath. Another thought in my thought, another possession in what I possess, a thousand things and a thousand beings implicated in my complications” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 298).

In Deleuze's reading of Klossowski, the sign is that which leaves a trace, and we make sense of these traces by becoming aware of the movement of forces in relation. Here we see once more the dynamism inherent in the world, the immanent unfolding of actualities from an ever-replenishing repository of virtuality – 'the breath inside the breath' ; that is to say, each vital impulse ('breath') contains not just its own vitality, but the means by which the next vital impulse may be generated. Such replenishment of the virtual is dependent on the continued implication of the self in their own world, and in this way signs can be seen as the continued evidence that the world in which we live is itself alive to us in turn. We don't simply perceive signs – we animate them, as they animate us.⁷¹

Elsewhere, Deleuze links the notion of signs with learning:

Learning is essentially concerned with signs. Signs are the object of a temporal apprenticeship, not of an abstract knowledge. To learn is first of all to consider a substance, an object, a being as if it emitted signs to be deciphered, interpreted. There is no apprentice who is not the "Egyptologist" of something. One becomes a carpenter only by becoming sensitive to the signs of wood, a physician by becoming sensitive to the signs of disease. Vocation is always predestination with regard to signs. Everything that teaches us something emits signs; every act of learning is an interpretation of signs or hieroglyphs. (Deleuze, 2000, p. 4).

This 'temporal apprenticeship' situates the process of learning as an engagement with the world as it is continually comes into being rather than a contemplation of distanced abstractions.⁷² In order to unpick this understanding of learning and signs we need to first outline what Deleuze means by signs. Bogue offers this summary:

Signs for Deleuze are not transparent media for the communication of information. Rather, they are hieroglyphs, enigmas that point beyond themselves

71 As Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition*:
"All of this forms a rich domain of *signs* which always envelop heterogeneous elements and animate behaviour" (Deleuze, 2004, p. 94).

72 The idea of learning as an apprenticeship in signs has strong resonances with RS Peters' notion of education as an initiation (Peters, 1966)

to something hidden. In this sense, the moon as sign is a bright surface gesturing toward its dark side. Every sign has something enfolded within it, something “other,” that must be unfolded if it is to be understood. The interpretation of signs, then, is a matter of “explicating,” or unfolding (from Latin *plicare*: to fold), that which is “implicated,” or enfolded. (Bogue in Semetsky, 2008, p. 1)

While it is unclear whether Bogue is using the term ‘interpretation’ here in the way that Deleuze’s Nietzsche characterises it⁷³ or in its broader and more common sense, but there is a clear resonance with the Nietzschean notion of becoming, of learning as a process of active, embodied engagement (unfolding as an act of will) rather than solely a passive and distanced contemplation of essences, of transcendental forms to be observed objectively and dispassionately. To learn, in this sense, is to engage in a struggle with the forces that comprise the world. Deleuze makes the link between signs and forces clear early in Nietzsche and Philosophy:

A phenomenon is not an appearance or even an apparition but a sign, a symptom which finds its meaning in an existing force...All force is appropriation, domination, exploitation of a quantity of reality. Even perception in its diverse aspects, is the expression of forces which appropriate nature. That is to say that nature itself has a history. The history of a thing, in general, is the succession of forces which take possession of it and the co-existence of the forces which struggle for possession. The same object, the same phenomenon, changes sense depending on the force which appropriates it (Deleuze, 1986, p. 3).

Learning – making sense of something – is thus an interpretive process, one which involves the learner in their world – they must take possession of the signs they wish to understand in order to make sense of them, and this ‘taking possession’ necessarily involves the learner in a struggle with forces, immanently implicated in the process, not simply observing it from afar.⁷⁴ Deleuze makes a distinction elsewhere between learning and simply being able to remember things:

73 “This is the problem of interpretation: to estimate the quality of force that gives meaning to a given phenomenon, or event, and from that to measure the relation of the forces which are present” (Deleuze, 1986, p. 49).

74 For more on this notion of ‘taking possession’, see the following chapter and the discussion of Tardean Monadism.

What is essential in the Search is not memory and time, but the sign and truth. What is essential is not to remember but to learn. For memory is valid only as a faculty capable of interpreting certain signs; time is valid only as the substance or type of this or that truth. And memory, whether voluntary or involuntary, intervenes only at specific moments of the apprenticeship, in order to concentrate its effect or to open a new path (Deleuze, 2000, p. 91).

The faculty of memory, as we have seen in chapter 7, is involved in the active synthesis of time. The traces of the world that can be re-presented by an individual to themselves through memory are certainly an aspect of their learning, of the sense they have made of things; but it is not the whole of learning, nor the whole of sense. Rather, for Deleuze, memory is, in its functional sense, an active process but can also (sometimes dysfunctionally) be a product of a passive synthesis, as when memory comes unbidden and involuntary (Deleuze, 2004, p. 107). Hence traces can re-emerge unbidden (just as they can be made without our knowledge or consent, owing to our ‘faculty of forgetting’), and in so doing it is the trace-as-memory that takes possession of the individual, not the other way around. Such an irruption of memory constitutes another form of the sign, and is likewise a matter of interpretation for the individual who experiences it. Hence, our learning is more than simply a conscious absorption of the external world onto the film plate of our memories,⁷⁵ to be recalled and utilised when needed, but involves our responsiveness to signs, fluctuations in intensities from without and within, for our responses set out what path we are set (or set ourselves) to follow. In this way, learning is a matter of transformation through implication, and this transformation is as much about sensing and making sense of our (‘interior’) selves as it is about our engagement with the ‘externality’ of the world. Each implicates the other (more of which in chapter 15). We can therefore think of learning as a double and parallel process of *configuration* and *confabulation*, where the former term refers to our apprehension of signs, and the latter term refers to the perpetual unfolding (implication) of ourselves into the world (and the corresponding explication of the world into our selves) in a way that creates a sense of continuous identity – we are the story that we tell ourselves. This latter notion, confabulation, corresponds closely to an aspect of Deleuze’s reading of Foucault’s concept of *subjectivation*: the ‘folding in’ of forces, the

75 An image recalling both Hume and Lucretius

relationship of the self to its self, which is continually being reborn (Deleuze, 2006, p. 86). Both con-figuration and con-fabulation employ the prefix con-, ‘with’ (OED), so both can be seen as processes of ‘with-ing’- one directed outwards at the continually unfolding figure/field that constitutes the ‘plane of immanence’; the other directed inwards, the continual enfolding of significance, meaning, and sense from the wider world into the mind and memory of the embodied subject (of which it is a constituent part). The division between ‘outward’ and ‘inward’ in the way I have expressed them here is largely a matter of convention and is not unproblematic, as we will examine in more detail in chapter 15.⁷⁶

We can see through this discussion of signs, that sense and sense-making involves an engagement with the world, and an implication in it. We are inseparable from our own sense of the world. In the same way, Lucy’s sense of her practices are obtained not simply through representations of her own (prior) sense of what she is doing, but by being implicated in the doing itself. Lucy’s practice of Learning Development can be seen in terms of a ‘temporal apprenticeship’ in signs, as she comes to make sense of what she does. In order to obtain a richer understanding of those practices, she must somehow begin to apprehend the virtualities that structure it. If the first part of Lucy’s task is to ‘specify the adjunct fields’ (i.e. the singularities and relations that recur in her practices, or as Somers-Hall puts it, “finding equivalent cases that emerge from the problem”), then this can be seen as an *interpretive* act directed at those signs that constitute the singularities and relations inherent in Lucy’s practices. Her task (and ours now) is to devise a way of determining the nature and qualities of the singularities and relations that constitute her practice. – what, in actuality, are the ‘equivalent cases’ that ‘emerge from the problem’ of Learning Development?

We saw in chapter 11 that the virtual structures the relations of the actual, and that the actual in turn can alter the structure inherent in the virtual. When we are discussing ‘structure’ here, we must try not to think in terms of an extensive structure, a structure that occupies metric space (that is, its extension in space can be measured, like a

76 The term ‘confabulation’ has pejorative overtones in Psychology, pertaining as it does to delusions about one’s self, an indulgence in fantasy, ‘the recital of experiences which have no foundation in fact’ (OED). I wish to reclaim the term for Philosophy and employ it here to convey a counterpoint to the configuration of signs in the construction of the narrative trajectory of our life’s story, the details of which can only be verified as ‘true’ by ourselves, and only then with a finite degree of confidence. Better then to consider the whole of our ego-selves a fantasy, and use that as our starting point.

building, a sculpture, a bridge); rather, we must try to invoke something else. A useful tool for distinguishing our thought in this way involves drawing a distinction between geometry and topology.

Plotinsky neatly summarises the distinction between the geometric and the topological in his discussion of Deleuze and Derrida:

‘Geometry’ and ‘topology’, while both concerned with space, are distinguished by their different mathematical provenances. Geometry (*geo-metry*) has to do with measurement, while topology disregards measurement or scale, and deals only with the structure of space *qua* space (*topos*) and with the essential shapes or structures of figures. Insofar as one deforms a given figure continuously (i.e. does not separate points previously connected and, conversely, does not connect points previously separated) the resulting figure is considered the same (Plotinsky, 2003, p. 99).

In this formulation, we may consider the structure of the virtual in terms of ‘essential shapes or structures of figures’ in a way that is not dependent on measurement or scale. As Plotinsky goes on to explain, it is this shift in emphasis that Deleuze draws from his reading of Leibniz⁷⁷ and his work on the differential calculus.

To briefly summarise for our purposes here, a geometric view of space presupposes an overarching framework against which the location of a point may be calculated (its coordinates). We may take the coordinate value of any point to be commensurate with the ‘identity’ of that entity. In order to have an ‘identity’ as such, any point requires an external frame (in three dimensions: *x*, *y*, *z*) against which it can be plotted. The relative position of two points may likewise be plotted against this frame. A metric view therefore defines one thing relative to another in terms of the value of their coordinates and the difference between the points. Taken metaphorically, identity (Being) is thereby constructed through recourse to a transcendent framework against which an entity can be measured, and that identity can be constructed through its difference with other entities.

77 See Deleuze (2004), pp. 217-219; and Deleuze (1993), Ch.4.

By contrast, a topological view does not require such a transcendent framework in order to understand the relation of points. The differential calculus is concerned less with the identity (coordinates) of a point, but with the rate of change of its position relative to itself. In other words, we have in topology a way of considering change that relies only on local information, without recourse to any external frame. In the language we have been using to engage with Lucy's practices as a Learning Developer, this means moving towards a way of understanding and engaging with her Particular Case of practice (local information) without any need to appeal to (or conjure up) a Universal Picture (a generalised view providing an external frame).

In order to develop an understanding of the virtual as a topological construct, DeLanda develops Deleuze's engagement with Poincaré (DeLanda 2002). There are three stages in such a method, and at first these can seem rather abstract, a result of the mathematical provenance of this way of thinking. The first stage in thinking 'topologically' involves considering the thing being examined as a system (that is, possessing a degree of coherence through the relations between its constituent elements), and then identifying the relevant ways of changing such a system. Using Poincaré's language, the ways a system can change represent its 'degrees of freedom'. The next move is to create a 'manifold' with as many dimensions as there are degrees of freedom. This can be considered an imaginative, conceptual operation – this 'manifold' is simply the system (thing being looked at) considered in terms of the different ways it can change. The manifold describes and distinguishes the parameters of the locality (the thing as a thing in and of itself, without having to 'frame' it in relation to external points); the final move is to then consider what points are of interest within that system, the relations between those points, and any patterns or tendencies described by those points as a series, what Poincaré called attractors but which correspond with singularities (remarkable points) in Deleuze's parlance. These are points in a relational system that that system tends towards, in the same way that water will 'tend towards' the lowest point in a physical system that is structured according to gravitational forces; or what our attention 'tends towards' when looked at in terms of the remarkable (singular) and the ordinary. What Poincaré devised mathematically, Deleuze and DeLanda seek to apply more broadly, to social systems rather than just to abstract mathematical or physical ones, hence the forces at play will be social forces, or, to express this more clearly, the power relations between actors in a social space.

If we consider Lucy's Learning Development practices as a 'system', constructing it as such, there are any number of ways one could approach determining the ways that it might change. Unlike the example of a simple pendulum, which can change in only two ways (velocity and position) and thus has two degrees of freedom, a complex social system such as a university has potentially a great multitude of different ways of changing. DeLanda makes the point, however, that we are here only interested in the *relevant* ways the system might change, the determination of which is a matter of judgement based on experience (DeLanda 2002, pp. 5-6). In the case of Lucy's Learning Development practices, then, we must consider the relevant ways that system might change. Another way of framing this question is to consider the relevant ways Lucy's practice can be *affected*. As we saw in chapter 11 above, there are three affective 'modes' which govern the relational capacities of Lucy's practice corresponding with the Learner (student), the Institution (university) and the Disciplines (including the professions). Given this, we might well judge that there are in fact three 'degrees of freedom' in Learning Development, corresponding with the three affective 'modes'. Any change in Lucy's practices will result in a change in her relationship with one or more of these three modes, and any change can be traced back to the way they relate to the learner, the institution, and/or the disciplines. For example, a change in Lucy's approach to conducting tutorials (Lucy's capacity to teach) will affect the learner directly (in the guise of their corresponding capacity to learn); or to give another example from the other direction, a change in what the institution measures (such as the introduction of a Teaching Excellence Framework, for example), will result in a change in Lucy's practices, insofar as these respond to the imperatives of the institution (that is to say, a change in the institution's capacity to enable learning will affect Lucy's capacity to be enabled). All and every change in Lucy's practices can be traced back to either the learner, the institution, and/or the disciplines. In other words, in spite of the potential for complexity, there exists in these modalities of Lucy's practice certain relational parameters around which any change will manifest affectively. These three modalities, as degrees of freedom, thus become the dimensions of Lucy's Learning Development practices as a manifold. In Poincaré's conception, the manifold is merely an abstract construction that permits the relations between values (including changes in those relations or values) to be represented. We can consider Lucy's practices in much the same way, considered as a manifold, we may represent the relations between the

forces (that is, socially expressed power relations), the changes in those forces (relative strength, relative weakness), and the rates of change between them expressed as temporalities (that is, how they relate to each other in and over time) in order to trace any tendencies or ‘remarkable points’ (attractors, singularities) in that system.

In chapter 7 we have already equated the singularities in Lucy’s practices with those non-ordinary events whereby habits (passive synthesis of time) are de-contracted and Lucy is forced into reflective representation of her practices (active synthesis of time). What is ‘remarkable’ for Lucy are the so-called normative crises. I have described three of these – crises of expectation, legitimacy, and conduct. Topologically speaking, we can now depict these crises as ‘attractors’ in Lucy’s particular manifold, points to which the system (of her practices) ‘tend towards’. Each instance of a crisis can thus be seen in terms of a singularity, a distinct moment at which the virtualities inherent in any situation condense through the event to become actual occurrences, things that happen in the world; when such crises are seen to recur, to share some common form, even when each instance of crisis is unique, we can perceive a *universal singularity*, tendencies towards particular occurrences in the actual world that are structured by the composition of the virtual. Hence, though each particular crisis has its unique form and formulation, the interpretation of that crisis as corresponding to one of the ‘types’ of normative crisis identified in chapter 3 (crisis of expectation; crisis of legitimacy; crisis of conduct) reveals the *particular* (individual singularity) to be an expression of a universal (universal singularity). It is through an exploration of these universal singularities that we can begin to construct an Idea⁷⁸ of Learning Development. This might appear to be something of a radical step to take. The present analysis implies that what were originally depicted as unwelcome disruptions, anomalies, are in fact the points towards which the overall system of Lucy’s Learning Development practices tend. In that sense, they are not anomalous disturbances, but *inevitable essences*. These seeming ‘disruptions’ to habituated practices that to Lucy seem so laborious and difficult (recall the insomnia to which she seeks to neutralise) are, in fact, defining features of her practices. How can this be?

In a way, this move is perhaps not so radical at all. I have already argued that it is primarily at moments of crisis that Lucy becomes aware of her practices *as* practices

78 Or alternatively, *the problem*

(Part One), that is to say, when she becomes aware of Learning Development as a distinctive practice of which she is an exponent. This self-reflexive moment is evocative insofar as it brings to the fore Lucy's practices and situates them around an identity shared with others. From a methodological standpoint, what this analysis shows is that the first procedure in the 'method of dramatisation' (vice-diction) discussed in chapters 12 and 13 above is fulfilled by identifying these 'attractors', these singularities (learner/institution/disciplines) as degrees of freedom (things that can be changed, or affected by Lucy's practices). Instances and particulars corresponding with these singularities and their inter-relationship at 'remarkable points' (points of crisis) can be seen as 'universal singularities' tracing out patterns and tendencies using only 'local information', that is, in the Particular Case. In so doing, we have no need of the Universal Picture as some kind of externally-persistent framework against which practices are to be judged. Lucy can formulate the 'problem' or the Idea of Learning Development on the basis of her own experience of practice – her own sense and sense-making. What then remains, in the process of dramatisation is the second stage, the 'condensation of singularities'. As Somers-Hall puts it, this comprises identifying "singular points of the Idea where it engenders solutions that are different from the present state of affairs" and for Bogue "undoing conventional representations of our situation" and "conducting experiments on the real". Before turning to this in chapter 16, we will examine one approach to 'undoing conventional representations' as Bogue has put it, by turning our attention to the idea of the 'monad' as Deleuze develops this through an engagement with the work of Leibniz and Tarde. This will allow us to better conceptualise the rather abstract notion of 'condensing singularities (chapter 17) in light of the discussion of sense and sense making presented in chapter 13, and the insights obtained in the present chapter.

Chapter 15: Configuration of the monad

I'm coming to the realisation that there are kinds of patterns in what I do. Everything I do in my work – every tutorial, workshop, lecture, meeting – is always different in terms of the details, nothing is ever exactly the same. But I guess there are common threads to every interaction I have. Everything I do is different – no two days are the same, no two tutorials exactly alike. Even when I'm doing a repeat of a workshop or seminar, for example, where I'm pretty much repeating myself, there are still always little variations. No matter what I do, my activities will always involve a particular student doing a particular assignment on a particular course; or, a particular colleague sitting on a particular committee addressing a particular university agenda; or, a particular academic colleague in a particular discipline trying to address a particular aspect of the curriculum. And although the particulars will change from day to day, from hour to hour, they will always be variations on a theme. I think it's these 'themes' I need to pay attention to, and what particular instances give rise to my sense that there is a theme there at all.

In examining Lucy's practices as a Learning Developer, we have examined the relations between that emerge in the Particular Case, resisting the urge to gather together such particulars in order to form an Aggregate View from which we may generalise the essential features of her practice and settle upon a bounded identity. As I have argued (throughout Part Two and in chapter 11), the very process of aggregating particulars and generalising can lead us into the essentialist trap of positing the existence of a transcendent category to which Lucy as a practitioner feels she must somehow adhere to in order for her practices to be considered legitimate. Such a desire for authorisation can lead to *ressentiment*, bad conscience, and a reluctant submission to the will of others, orientations that can in turn can lead others into the same subservient modes of thinking (chapter 10), contributing to a spiralling nihilism. At the heart of this resistance is the idea that we can obtain an understanding of Learning Development as a set of practices by focusing on Lucy's Particular Case and, instead of generalising outwards (aggregates, universals), focus inwards on the conditions that structure Lucy's practices in their particular iteration. In so doing, we are not attempting to make general claims

about such practices in such a way as to be either definitive or universally applicable to other settings; rather, the aim is to enable any practitioner to see in Lucy's Particular Case patterns and features that can elucidate an understanding of their own practices. Vice-diction provides the means by which this might be achieved – by first identifying the fields of inter-relations that constitute the particular (chapters 13 and 14), and then by speculating how those intersecting fields might be configured or structured in further iterations in which they might manifest and interact (the purpose of this chapter and the next). What we have as a result is not a 'geometric' conception of Learning Development, one which is defined and bounded and is 'more or less true' in each iteration, but rather a 'topological' conception, which can take a variety of forms in each particular iteration but which shares, in the presence of certain features ('adjunct fields'), an underlying structure, one which prefigures its actual iteration through a virtual manifold, a 'phase space of possibilities' (DeLanda, 2002). Such a conception precedes in its virtuality any actual form that we might arrive at via a generalisation from aggregates. When we move from the Particular Case to the Aggregate View, we are shifting our scale of reference from the one spatio-temporal domain (embodied by Lucy) to a multitude of spatio-temporal domains in which Lucy is but one practitioner amongst many. Underlying patterns and principles, when identified across the various domains, can be abstracted from this Aggregate View as generalisations and formulated as hypotheses to be tested or as theories to be applied; likewise, as we have seen in chapter 9, the Aggregate View can be misapprehended and reified into something more, an ideal Universal Picture or transcendent form. Whether generalised or reified, the scale of reference widens to accommodate a broader view than the instance under investigation.

When, through a method of vice-diction, Lucy seeks to specify the adjunct fields (singularities; elements in relation) within a Particular Case, she too attempts to shift her scale of reference in order to accommodate a wider view that encompasses the broad play of relations that constitute her milieu. Through vice-diction, Lucy necessarily maintains a fixed point in the form of her own embodied perspective but attempts to comprehend how that perspective is shaped by relations of forces, relations which manifest as contingency, providing limitations on what can be actualised from the virtual manifold which structure those relations. The contingency inherent in her domain of action has its genesis in a multitude of points *beyond* her own 'here and

now', but they can only ever be experienced via her own subjectivity, *within* that 'here and now'. The fact of her embodiment – her humanity – restricts Lucy's perspective to what she can engage with (perceptually, conceptually) as a living subject. We have seen (chapter 11; chapter 14) that this 'domain of action' can be characterised in terms of 'affections', that is, the capacity for Lucy to affect and be affected through her practices, and thereby to effect change in the 'system' of her practices. The extent of that 'system' is conditioned by spatio-temporal constraints.⁷⁹ In determining that the 'system' (or manifold) of Learning Development consists of three degrees of freedom corresponding with the learner (or student); the institution (the university); and the disciplines (and associated professions), we are able to consider the way in which Lucy's practices might serve to change the way that system actualises itself.

Determining the 'degrees of freedom' of a system is a process of configuring something *as* a system. The three degrees of freedom of Learning Development (student-learner; university-institution; discipline-profession) comprise the system of Learning Development constituted and configured as such (that is to say, as an assemblage)⁸⁰ by considering the relevant affective relations at play. Configuration involves isolation and focus; the foregrounding of one aspect of the system-assemblage at the expense of backgrounding another. Our attention is drawn to one particular element, but in so doing our sensing and sense-making faculties are drawn away from something else. To be drawn to one element is to find in it something remarkable, in contrast to the ordinariness of what remains. In his discussion of the painting of Francis Bacon, Deleuze refers to the boundary between the foregrounded aspect and that which has been backgrounded as: '...the place, that is, the round area, the ring, or the contour

79 Bergson summarises this situation as follows:

What is an affection? Our perception, we said, indicates the possible action of our body on others. But our body, being extended, is capable of acting upon itself as well as upon other bodies. Into our perception, then, something of our body must enter. When we are dealing with external bodies, these are, by hypothesis, separated from ours by a space, greater or lesser, which measures the remoteness in time of their promise or of their menace: this is why our perception of these bodies indicates only possible actions. But the more the distance diminishes between these bodies and our own, the more the possible action tends to transform itself into a real action, the call for action becoming more urgent in the measure and proportion that the distance diminishes. And when this distance is nil, that is to say, when the body to be perceived is our own body, it is a real and no longer a virtual action that our perception sketches out.... In this interiority of affective sensation consists its subjectivity; in that exteriority of images in general, their objectivity (Bergson 1991, pp. 233-234)

80 A term used by Deleuze (and others) to denote 'an ensemble of material relations and a corresponding regime of signs' (Zourabichvili 2012, p. 145).

which is the common limit of the Figure and the field' (Deleuze, 2003, p. 12). Deleuze goes on to explain:

The contour, as a "place," is in fact the place of an exchange in two directions: between the material structure and the Figure, and between the Figure and the field. The contour is like a membrane through which this double exchange flows. Something happens in both directions. (Deleuze, 2003, p. 12).

So far in this thesis we have skirted around this issue of inside-outside, the object of our consideration and the background against which it is considered, and the nature of the 'membrane' between the two. In chapter 13 I argued that perception (of the external) and cognition (an internal process) are inexorably interlinked. A more robust conceptualisation of what I am trying to characterise here comes from another strand of Deleuze's work involving his development of the concept of the Monad from Leibniz, via the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde. This development of Leibnizian monadism provides a way for us to consider the way the subject (for us, Lucy) intersects with the world around them (Lucy's practices as a Learning Developer), and sets out the basis by which we can consider the relation between the object of thought and its context.

Leibniz rejected the Cartesian dualistic account of mind and matter and proposed a metaphysical account in which all created things are comprised of simple substances – monads (Look 2017)⁸¹. These monads are conceived as being without parts themselves – they are simple and indivisible – but can enter into composites with other monads to create the variety of aggregated forms we see around us. Leibniz's monads cannot be affected from without, they can only be changed from within; and, as: '...the true atoms of nature and, in brief, the elements of things (Leibniz, 1714; 1991, p. 68)', they cannot be modified, only created or annihilated. Each monad expresses within itself all the other monads in existence to a lesser or greater extent, presenting an account of reality as an interconnected unity distinguished by varying perspectives on the whole:

Everyone knows the name that Leibniz ascribes to the soul or to the subject as a metaphysical point: the monad. He borrows this name from the Neoplatonists who used it to designate a state of One, a unity that envelops a multiplicity, this

81 Look (2017)

multiplicity developing the One in the manner of a series. The One specifically has the power of envelopment and development, while the multiple is inseparable from the folds that it makes when it is enveloped, and of unfoldings when it is developed (Deleuze, 1993, p. 25)

The innovation of Leibniz's monadism, and its significance to the present discussion lies in its positing a univocal alternative to the dualist account of reality provided by Descartes, which separated the world of the mind from the world of material things, that is to say, the world of sense-making from the world of sensing. Leibniz's detailed and complex ontological account of God and nature, by contrast, neatly side-steps dualism's key problem, namely an account of the mechanism whereby the separate domains of mind and body, of thought and matter, intersect (Look, 2017). In the present thesis, this problem is fundamental to Lucy's understanding of her own practice, and the separation she experiences between the habitual-embodied on the one hand, and the represented-reflected on the other, and the consequent slide into reactivity and *ressentiment*: the separation of her force from what it is capable of doing, as detailed in Part Two. For Leibniz, there is no substantive distinction between mind/body – our monad (or soul) is a fundamental structure of reality that comprises both our mind and the material conditions of the universe as a whole, our thoughts and all the material things that we can think about.

The counterintuitive paradox that can make any understanding of the monad difficult concerns Leibniz's famous notion that "the monad has no windows by which anything may enter or leave (Leibniz, 1714; 1991, p. 70). That is to say, each monad is a self-contained whole, a 'simple' with no components and cannot be changed from outside. As Lorenc observes (Tarde 2012 p. 78), this aspect of Leibniz's conception of the monad was 'uncongenial' to the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde, who nevertheless saw value in the concept as a whole and developed Leibniz's ideas into his own conceptions of the social world. For Tarde, relationality was fundamental, and a monad that was closed off to exchange ceases to be a useful way to consider how things relate to one another:

As a complement to the closure of his monads, Leibniz made each one a camera obscura where the whole universe of other monads is represented in a reduced

form and from a particular angle; and moreover, he had to posit a pre-established harmony, in the same way that, as the complement of their wandering blind atoms, materialists must invoke universal laws or a single formula embracing all laws, a kind of mystical commandment which all beings would obey and which was not produced by any being, a kind of ineffable and unintelligible word which, having never been pronounced by anyone, nonetheless would be heard everywhere and forever...All these characteristics are so many mysteries, which create a curious embarrassment for the philosopher. Is there any hope of resolving them by conceiving of open monads which would penetrate each other reciprocally, rather than being mutually external? I believe there is...(Tarde 2012, p. 26).

Tarde responded to his objection to this closure of monads by proposing another way of considering them, based on a reciprocity of perception:

When I enter into verbal communication with one or several of my fellows, our respective monads, in my view, reciprocally grasp each other (Tarde, 2012, p. 55)

In this view, each monad is capable of perceiving one another, not so much interconnecting as containing the other within itself. In this way, Tarde puts forward a conception of the monad which is not hermetically sealed and is instead capable of apprehending ('grasping') other monads, but which nevertheless remains a simple whole and is self-contained, even if that containment consists, to a greater or lesser extent of other monads. He goes on to claim that this is how the component monads of nature co-exist. However, it is in the human social domain that Tarde sees this form of reciprocally-adhering monadism having the most clear expression:

We must, however, look to the social world to see monads laid bare, grasping each other in the intimacy of their transitory characters, each fully unfolded before the other, in the other, by the other. This is the relation par excellence, the paradigm of possession of which all others are only sketches or reflections (Tarde, 2012, p. 56)

Tarde goes on to develop this idea of 'reciprocal possession' wherein the monads that comprise the world mutually absorb and integrate one another:

It is reciprocal possession which explains the formation of those beautiful celestial mechanisms in which, by the power of mutual attraction, every point is a centre (Tarde, 2012, pp. 56-57).

Every point is a centre – an intuitive truth to the individual subject; and a way of understanding (with empathy and antipathy both) the subjectivity of others. The 'social monad' in Tarde's conception, is one that comprises a relation of forces, in a way that recalls Nietzsche's account of forces:

Each monad draws the world to itself, and thus has a better grasp of itself. Of course, they are parts of each other, but they can belong to each other to a greater or lesser extent, and each aspires to the highest degree of possession; whence their gradual concentration; and besides, they can belong to each other in a thousand different ways, and each aspires to learn new ways to appropriate its peers. Hence their transformations. They transform in order to conquer; but, since none will ever submit to another except out of self-interest, none can fully accomplish its ambitious dream, and the sovereign monad is exploited by its vassal monads, even as it makes use of them. (Tarde, 2012, pp. 57-58)

Thus the (social) relations of these interactive monads (each striving to contain and make use of the others) is governed by internally-arising forces within each of them. This is reminiscent of Whitehead's conception of 'appetition' (Sherborne 1966, p. 208), the mechanism inherent in each entity (an 'immediate matter of fact') which drives that entity to engage with other entities ("a principle of unrest") in order to 'appropriate' them. Thus, there are internally-arising 'appetites' in each monad that govern the application of power between entities. Social relations are, for Tarde, power relations governed by desires (appetites). This is not simply a human condition but a condition of material nature itself.⁸² We can see in this conception Nietzsche's notion of the

82 This represents a kind of 'vitalist materialism' (Alliez in Jones and Roffe 2009, p. 215), taken up by Deleuze and Guattari in their 'microphysics of power' (ibid. p. 214), the materialism of which the likes of Cole argue take Deleuze's philosophy beyond anything offered by a phenomenological account which posits the subject as the centre of all experience (see Cole 2012, p. 12). An immanent materialism is not
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interaction of forces, with one assuming dominance (the active) and the other subservience (the reactive – see Deleuze, NP, p. 37). But it also clarifies one aspect of Nietzsche’s account insofar as no given entity or monad can ever be totally or permanently dominant, with even the subservient (‘vassal’) entity exploiting the dominant one in order to further its own ‘self interest’. We see here how the weak can come to overthrow the strong – that is, by submitting to the strong to further or preserve its own desires, with the concomitant remainder of *ressentiment*. The account of the modes of practice in Part Two of the present thesis lays out in detail how Lucy’s own practice of Learning Development follows this trajectory.

Three features of Tarde’s monads emerge which will help us to understand the mechanism whereby Lucy, as a Learning Development practitioner, can structure her own relations with the world. The first is that Lucy, in her particularity and with her own perspectives on the world (including her practices), can be considered as a monad – a ‘simple’ whole, with no component parts as such. This runs counter to the common-sense view that constructs the individual as an aggregate of their body, actions, and experiences, and grounds the analysis outside the logic of aggregation and separation. The second feature of use to us is that such a ‘monadic’ conception of the individual characterises them as a convergence of the internal and the external: they are ‘internal’ insofar as they experience themselves as coherent and separate entities, distinct from the world they inhabit; and yet they are also (simultaneously) ‘external’ insofar as what constitutes them internally resides, to a greater or lesser degree, within other monads (this univocity recalls the Parallelism of Spinoza).⁸³ Thirdly, Lucy-as-monad structures her relations with the world at large (and is, in turn, herself structured by them) through an internally generated desire or appetite which can be considered forces – that which ‘grasps’ the other. Importantly, the inter-relation of these forces is not absolute, all-or-nothing, in terms of which dominates and which is dominated, but rather consists of relative degrees of dominance and subservience which are in a constant state of flux.

grounded in the experiencing subject, which is seen as a component in a much broader ‘biopolitical’ (Alliez, p. 16) context.

83 Proposition 7 of the *Ethics*: ‘The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things’ (Spinoza 2015, p. 25)

Let us now return to the concept of ‘configuration’. This was alluded to early in this chapter and in chapter 14, and characterised thus far as the double process of apprehending externalities and folding them within; and of apprehending internalities and manifesting them without. Tardean monadism can further advance our understanding of this process. Recall that our concern here is to devise a method of ‘condensing the singularities’, which is to say, ‘...Once we have an Idea of the problem, we can attempt to find those singular points of the Idea where it engenders solutions that are different from the present state of affairs’ (Somers-Hall, 2013, p. 156). The ‘Idea of the problem’ that we have formulated in chapter 14 consists of conceptualising Learning Development topologically as the ‘problem’ of how a practitioner like Lucy negotiates the relations of force relating to the three ‘degrees of freedom’ in Learning Development as an assemblage/system – learners, institutions, disciplines – and how these relations can come to change. The ‘solutions’ to this ‘problem’ are to be found in those ‘singular points of the Idea’ (singularities), which we have already conceived in terms of what in Parts One and Two of this thesis were termed ‘normative crises’. So, if we are to progress with our task of considering expressions of Learning Development that are ‘different from the present state of affairs’, we must look to those singularities, the normative crises, expressed in terms of the three degrees of freedom that take the form learner/institution/disciplines. What is required for this is a robust conceptualisation of how Lucy as a practitioner intersects with those singularities that comprise her practice, and this is where the concept of monadism comes into play.

The first advantage in looking at Lucy’s Learning Development practices as monads is that it removes any sense of aggregation, accumulation or addition from any picture that we attempt to draw. That is to say, considered ‘simply’, Learning Development (in its particular expression, through Lucy) should not now be conceived as an aggregating force, constructing itself through the accumulation of new parts or the negation of others. Instead, we must think of Learning Development as entire in and of itself, and containing within itself the whole of its inherent relationality, from the perspective (Particular Case) of the practitioner. Lucy’s practices are therefore always and necessarily whole, and subject to change entirely from within as Lucy herself (re)formulates her own monad. These practices can never be ‘incomplete’, and are

always ‘adequate’ insofar as they are actualised.⁸⁴ Hence we are dealing with Learning Development as a ‘simple whole’ that can be understood in the particular, not a concept of Learning Development that is somehow always too complex to ever comprehend.⁸⁵

The second advantage of a monadic conception of Learning Development is that it switches our attention away from what is ‘inside’ or internal to Lucy (her thoughts, her sense of the phenomena of practice); *and* from what is ‘outside’ or external to her (the world, other people and their practices) as a set of counter-posing but separate positions. Instead, our focus is drawn to the ‘membrane’ itself, the interstice between inside/outside, the relation between the experience (inside) and what is being experienced (outside). Hence, our analysis of ‘configuration’ as a process inherent to any practice (and to learning itself) should not distinguish between Lucy herself (as an interior entity) and the object of her practices (as exterior entities). Hence ‘Lucy and the learner’; ‘Lucy and the institution’; ‘Lucy and the disciplines’ may well be accurate descriptions of Lucy and the forces at play in her practices, but constructing practice in this way implies a separation that is not helpful to our understanding. As Stiegler points out in his interpretation of the work of Simondon (important for Deleuze also), the ‘and’ in these kinds of linguistic formulations “opens up a field” that has the qualities both of conjunction and disjunction (Stiegler, 2015, p. 64-65). The ‘and’ joins two concepts together, but it also demands a distinction between them. The tension between conjunction and disjunction that the ‘and’ creates (*an intensive difference*, for Deleuze) constitutes what Simondon calls a ‘dyad’, a so-called ‘transductive relation’ in which each term on either side of the ‘and’ cannot exist (in the particular form that the ‘and’ relation creates) without the other. In the present discussion, when we speak of ‘Lucy and the learner’, ‘Lucy and the institution’ or ‘Lucy and the disciplines’ we are saying, following Simondon, that Lucy (as a practitioner of Learning Development) cannot exist as such without the learner/institution/disciplines, that the Learning Developer

84 That is, to become actual in any way, shape, or form requires conditions adequate to their actualisation. This is not to suggest that Lucy’s practices are always and necessarily *effective*, rather, it suggests that the only judgement of effectiveness that matters is Lucy’s own, insofar as it is within her own power to act on (or react to) any perceived inadequacy or criticism of what she does. This is not the same as saying that the opinions of others don’t matter, only that as the practitioner herself, Lucy always has some degree of agency over what she does or does not do, how she does or does not respond to that criticism.

85 This is not to deny its complexity, but to affirm that Learning Development is complicated. That is to say, ‘com-plicated’, a manifold consisting of various attributes, folded together in a particular way in any given place and time.

exists in a 'dyadic' relation with each, and that this relation is transductive – that is, the relation constitutes each of the terms, the concepts on either side of the 'and'. As Stiegler puts it, the conjunction/disjunction brought about by the 'and' creates “the knot of a constitutive contradiction that ties together a dynamic principle” (Stiegler, 2015, p. 64). In other words, the 'and' both *joins together* and *distinguishes between* the two terms on either side of it. Learning Development practice can thus be constituted around a sense of the integrated whole that is formed through Lucy's intersection with these elements (universal singularities) – learner/institution/discipline. Lucy cannot untangle herself fully from any one of these constituent elements, her perspectives are formed in tandem with them. Consequently, any particular conception of a student (their needs, their desires) that Lucy considers; any particular formulation of the university (its framings and its imperatives); and any understanding of the academic disciplines (its epistemological structures, its connectivity with wider society) – all of these conceptions are entangled and implicated with Lucy's own act of conceptualisation, constitutive of Lucy's own monad. In other words, we no longer have to focus on (or argue about) what is subjectively experienced or what is objectively true, but can instead focus upon the relation between the structures that give rise to actual practices in their particular form.

Finally, a monadic conception of Learning Development requires us to examine how these constituent forces apprehend one another. In other words, when we say that a monad 'grasps' another, thereby expressing its force, how does this translate into Lucy's apprehension of the various forces at play across the range of her practices, the way she senses and makes sense of them? We can achieve this by thinking about Lucy's perception/conception of her practices and the problem/idea they consist of as a continual process of configuration, as she relates one element to the other through foregrounding and backgrounding each in turn. This latter point is worth drawing out more clearly, as it forms the crux of the argument as developed in the present thesis. At a particular point in time, for example, Lucy's attention is focused upon a student, whom she apprehends 'in the context' of another locus of force – let's say their course of study and the discipline into which the student's learning is directed. Hence, Eleanor is not simply a student, she is a nursing student, so Lucy's apprehension of Eleanor proceeds on that basis, grasping Eleanor's particular individuality, but as a *student of nursing* rather than any other feature of Eleanor's life. The next moment (following on

from Eleanor-as-nursing-student), Lucy may consider the study of nursing as a profession, but only as it particularly pertains to the study of nursing *at her own university* and (say) its particular assessment regime. She may then consider assessment within the university, but primarily as it pertains to Eleanor's own situation. In terms of 'forces', then, we see here Lucy configuring her understanding first in terms of the learner in the context of the disciplines (Eleanor in the context of nursing); the disciplines in the context of the institution (nursing at her university); and the institution in the context of the learner (the university's assessment requirements in relation to Eleanor's capacity to fulfil them). This 'configuring' does not stop, cannot settle, is never resolved. It is a continual shifting of perspective to accommodate one dynamic force in relation to another.

The idea of foregrounding and backgrounding was referred to at the start of this chapter in relation to Deleuze's concept of the *contour* or *place* as it pertains to the figure and the background of a painting. The figure is what our perception is drawn to and what our conception lingers over, the 'remarkable' points (singularities) in the picture. The background (field) does not capture our attention in this way – it is what remains 'ordinary', and is barely perceived at all, or is perceived and forgotten, leaving only traces (see chapter 2). However, it is the field that enables the figure to be situated and contextualised in some way, that which enables any configuration to occur at all.⁸⁶ A black silhouette makes for a striking image against a white background, but is not perceivable at all when the background is also black – the context (background, field) in which a figure appears is thus crucial to our perception of it. Somers-Hall draws attention to the parallels between the work of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze in relation to the figure and the field, most notably for our purposes the way visual art disrupts the figure/field relation:

The painting of Bacon institutes two separate movements. First is...the attempt at the dissolution of the Gestalt structure through a variety of methods which disrupt the field/figure relation. This movement, mirroring Merleau-Ponty's analysis, takes place at the point of the contour, that is, between the figure and its background. The contour also precipitates a second movement, that between the material structure and the figure. This is the figure's attempt to escape

86 With configuration being, in effect, a perception of difference.

through the contour itself, which is the recognition of a “vanishing point” within the Gestalt, where the figure, under “all the pressures of the body,” attempts to escape from itself (FB, 16). Thus, within the body we find the root of a second exchange. This time the exchange becomes the source of an immobile movement, an “intense motionless effort” of the figure that is not in the realms of “the place, but rather of the event” (FB, 15). The dissolution of the Gestalt at the level of the actual necessarily opens up the possibility of reaching that which underlies the Gestalt. Thus, the collapse of the figure/background relation forces the figure to make a similar move, an effort to return to the pre-individual field which is its origin (Somers-Hall, 2006, pp. 218-219).

Here we see an articulation of the ‘reciprocal possession’ of the monad expressed in terms of figure and field, and the movement between them. The first part of the movement is characterised as the ‘disruption in the figure/field relation’, which is to say, the switching of one for the other – a switching of attentional focus to the background rather than the figure itself leads the eye (and the mind) from the form and features of the initial focus of attention, a shift in perceptual attention from the remarkable to the ordinary. This precipitates the second movement, which is to configure the ordinary as remarkable and vice-versa, hence the idea that the figure here escapes from itself (its own con-figuration) by being rendered ‘ordinary’, no longer the focus of our attention. This switching results in the ‘intense motionless effort’ – nothing moves or changes as such, but the shifting focus between figure and field is indicative of an intensive difference, with the ‘contour’ around which attention pivots revealing itself as the line of the fold – no longer simply ‘place’ but ‘event’ – a dynamic entity, not a fixed one. It is this disruption of apparent fixity that can be seen as the ‘dissolution of the Gestalt’, the breaking down of a stable identity, an act that can be equated to the destruction of the monad and the reconfiguration of something new.

Hence, when Lucy regards one of her students – constructs them as the figure – she does so in the context of another locus of force – that is to say, in the context of the institution, or of the disciplines. An awareness of this configuration (a shift from passive to active synthesis, from habit to reflection) is precipitated by some kind of disruption, which in Part One we identified with a kind of ‘normative crisis’. Any such crisis can be viewed as a ‘singularity’ (remarkable point) within the manifold of Learning

Development practice, and in chapter 14 the point was made that it is these ‘crises’ themselves that constitute Learning Development as a discrete set of practices, for it is only at these singular points that Learning Development is actively constructed as such. If we are to come to an understanding of the ‘structure’ of these singularities/crises, the conditions in which they are given to arise (that is to say, ‘the condensation of singularities’), then we must attend closely to this process of configuration, the switching between figure and field, between the various active forces (or degrees of freedom) constituting the manifold of Learning Development.

Any analysis that follows from these foundations should not aim to present a ‘true’ or ‘definitive’ account of Learning Development. Such an attempt would run counter to the spirit of the present analysis, which, following Nietzsche, seeks to be both *interpretive* and *evaluative* (Deleuze, 2006, p. 184). Interpretation, as we have noted above, is concerned with estimating the quality of forces and their relation through engagement with signs. Evaluation is the corresponding process, not of ascertaining *values* in themselves, but the principles around which they can be formulated: ‘Evaluations are not, in essence, values but ways of being, modes of existence of those who judge and evaluate, serving as principles for the values on the basis of which they judge’ (Deleuze, 2006, pp. 1-2). In Lucy’s case, this can be taken to mean the principles according to which she might see fit to apply her own force to one purpose or another, a judgement of the extent to which the pursuit of a given practice is (or is not) a worthy enterprise; that is, whether or not she ought to actively invest or to actively divest her power, energy, attention, or time on something. Hence evaluation is: ‘the differential element of corresponding values, an element which is both critical and creative’ (Deleuze, 2006, p. 1), which means for Lucy the ‘condensation of singularities’ around her Learning Development practices consists in no small part of determining the ways in which she might *usefully act*, and where it makes sense for her to withdraw from action. This is a conception – an *Idea* – of Learning Development that is cognisant of its immediate limitations, while remaining active and creative.

Chapter 16: The condensation of singularities

Well, I guess I'll try to do things better next time. Better? Differently. But then I guess next time will be different anyway.

Lucy can interpret and evaluate her practices conceived as *events* through an active process of configuration⁸⁷ and in so doing, she can come to see her work as a Learning Developer in terms of those relations that constitute the milieu of her action – the university in which students, academics, and their various institutional incarnations intersect. Each particular episode or experience of her professional life manifests in a great variety of ways, but in the reading I have offered, the *universal singularities*⁸⁸ of learner/institution/disciplines serve to act as attractors towards which all particularities tend, which is to suggest that, for Lucy, her Learning Development practices tend towards configurations of her relations with particular instances of these entities. That a Learning Developer working in a university ‘tends towards’ relations with students, academic departments, and the institution itself is hardly a revelation. What is significant here is that this relationality is characterised by ‘crisis’, by a shift from the habitual to the reflective, and that Learning Development itself is in a ‘dyadic’ or ‘reciprocal’ relationship with each of these singular elements in turn, subject to – and constituted by – their various forces, which are frequently in tension with one another. This is the key insight that the first procedure of vice-diction, the ‘specification of adjunct fields’, opens out for us. Learning development, as an identifiable entity, manifests to Lucy primarily in those moments where non-reflective, habituated practices are disrupted and disturbed, experienced as ‘crises’, problems, shortcomings. As I have argued in chapter 14, these problems are not *threats to the Learning Developer in their practice*, but *manifestations of their practice*, singularities that enable the constitution of Learning Development (as) itself.

87 And with a corresponding process of confabulation, which, as outlined in chapter 14, is close kin with Foucault’s notion of subjectivation

88 Recall from Ch.14 that universal singularities have been characterised as ‘tendencies towards particular occurrences in the actual world that are structured by the composition of the virtual’.

The second movement of vice-diction, the ‘condensation of singularities’ makes use of these configurations of Learning Development practice *in the case* to conduct ‘experiments on the real’ (Bogue 2012, p. 10). Bogue’s summary runs as follows:

We might say that vice-diction’s first moment, the specification of adjunct fields, entails an assessment of the configuration of singularities in the grand dice-throw of our present situation, and that vice-diction’s second moment, the condensation of singularities, involves a reconfiguration of singularities as we make of ourselves and our situation a second dice-throw. The object of vice-diction is not simply to comprehend the virtual differences at work in our world, but also to transform them, or rather to enter into the play of virtual differences and experiment with them...Vice-diction thus entails both a process of exploring and hence constructing connections among differences, and a process of undoing connections in an effort to form new ones (Bogue, 2012, p. 10)

The present chapter takes some of the examples cited earlier, particularly those detailed in chapter 3, and attempts to ‘reconfigure’ the actual scenarios in order to explore further the parameters of Lucy’s Learning Development practices.

Recall the example of lecturing the engineering students in how to write academic reports and the resulting self-imposed question: ‘Can this be done?’, a crisis of expectation. This ‘crisis of expectation’ was revisited in chapter 10 as an example of Lucy’s reactivity, hinting at a slide towards *ressentiment*. Here we are examining a particular case of Lucy’s practice. In so doing, we are dismissing the relevance or usefulness of any transcendent essences as constituting the reality of the scenario. There is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ for Lucy here, only the *event*, the actualisation of the particular. Looked at through the lens of vice-diction, we must first consider the ‘adjunct fields’, that is, what gives form to the processes involved? Looked at topologically, we can see the ‘degrees of freedom’ that underlie the details as presented. We have John, the lecturer, an exponent of the discipline (Engineering), who has articulated particular needs and perspectives both prior and subsequent to the teaching itself; we have the students/learners themselves, experienced by Lucy in their immediate response to her teaching, and in the reported outcome of their assessment; and all of this occupies an institutional space and time: a lecture theatre; a timetabled session, taking place at a

particular time in the academic year; an institutionally approved assessment regime. All of these factors (prior, during, and subsequent to the moment of contact with the students) constitute the *Event* as an actualised manifold. We can see that the key singularity from Lucy's perspective arises from her perception of the 'crisis' itself, from her articulating the problem in terms of 'Can this be done?', and associated singularities in the form of whatever is remarkable (and has thereby been captured in the accounts themselves) – the expectations of the lecturer; the immediate response of the students; their subsequent performance in the assessment; what followed from the lecturer's perspective; Lucy's own reactions in each case. The laying out of these associated features constitutes the 'specification of adjunct fields'.

What can be done with them? The dice have already been thrown and have landed. Fates have been sealed, the actual is manifest. The second part of vice-diction calls for the 'condensation of singularities', to play with the possibilities for action. The singular points in this *particular case*, it could be argued, revolve around Lucy's reactivity itself, and her articulation of the question 'can it be done' – the answer to which, it transpires in this case, is *no*. The demands of the discipline on the learners are such that the curriculum has permitted only a single lecture slot in which to impart complex knowledge. Hence the *capacity of Lucy to teach* is curtailed by this temporal constant; correspondingly, the *capacity of the students to learn* is likewise curtailed. But these curtailments themselves emerge from the constraints imposed by the relation of the discipline in its institutional incarnation, on decisions pertaining to how much time can and should be afforded to a 'skills' component, and even the very conceptualisation of report writing in the assessment regime as being contingent on the exercise of a set of skills, transferable in a 50 minute lecture session, from Lucy to the ranks of assembled students. Lucy can blame herself for not making her misgivings clear enough, for agreeing to the session in the first place, for approaching the session the wrong way, for any number of 'short comings', for 'falling short' of achieving her objectives – as we put it in chapter 3, for not being a *hero*. Or else she may seek to blame others – poorly attentive students, over-expectant lecturers, over-demanding curricula, inflexible timetabling, and so on – here we see her as the *martyr*. How easily Lucy's agency, her capacity for action, seems to slip away from her here. But useful action on her part, her *riposte*, cannot be furthered through the exercise of 'blame', the path of resentment

(*ressentiment*); nor is it positive for her to simply shrug her shoulders and say to herself: “Oh well, there is nothing I can do”, for that is the path of negation, of nihilism.

But already the present analysis has lifted Lucy out of the realm of self-abnegation, of looking to her own professional short-comings as the cause of something she may be tempted to call ‘failure’. The scale of any fault in this *event* is far-reaching and widely distributed insofar as it cannot be readily reduced to a single, distinct cause, nor restricted to the immediate environs of the lecture theatre, or a single action within the manifold assemblage. Much of the event has already been actualised before Lucy finds herself within it: In the formation of the curriculum; on the restrictions inherent to the institution; in the attitude and prior knowledge of the students. The first stage in any riposte from Lucy is recognition of this broadening-out of the spatio-temporal scale of action, beyond her immediate surrounds. But recall that Lucy is not simply outside looking in: She is a part of the event, integral to it, and the event is likewise a part of her. This is the contribution of Tarde’s monadism, of the principle of reciprocal possession. Lucy cannot simply deny the event, cast it aside, for she is already within it and she would, in effect be denying herself, casting herself aside. In recognising this, Lucy affirms her status as an agent capable of force within the milieu, and as such is capable of acting in an ethical manner. As Spinoza puts it in the *Ethics*:

The more a man successfully tries to seek his own advantage, i.e. to stay in existence, the more he is endowed with virtue. Conversely, to the extent that a man neglects his own advantage, i.e. neglects to do things favourable to his staying in existence, he is weak (Spinoza, 2017, §IV, p. 20).

As Lord points out, this Proposition is central to Spinoza’s ethical system (Lord, 2010, p. 111-112), and for Lucy, seemingly overwhelmed by circumstances beyond her direct control, the first step for her to act in a manner that is *virtuous*, is to recognise that these ‘circumstances’ are not somehow outside her domain of action, but inherent to her practices, even at an apparent distance. As we have seen in chapter 14, what can initially seem to be a problem or a shortcoming in her professional practice, this ‘crisis’ is, in fact, a singular expression of her practice itself. Lucy may not be able to control circumstances – to exert her force – but she cannot turn away from those circumstances, and it does her no good to blame herself, to blame others, to find ‘fault’. She must

recognise that she is already implicated in the event of her practice, and that any ‘fault’ is in fact an expression of that practice.

In this analysis of the so-called ‘crisis of expectation’ we have highlighted how vice-diction, as a lens for analysis, invites us to view Lucy’s practices as being a component part of a set of relations, expressed in particular ways – the students, the lecturer, the subject discipline, the curriculum, the assessment regime, the room, the length of the session, and that we may view these relations as an *event*. Viewed topologically, there are limited degrees of freedom (expressed as the students, the discipline and its institutional incarnation), the relations of which can be viewed in terms of capacities and their curtailment. We have examined how this in turn could lead to blame, resentment, denial, but that a monadic conception of practice invites us to think instead of Lucy’s potential for virtue in recognising the complexities and affirming her part in the event. We have not offered her any solutions, a prescription for a way out of the ‘problem’ she confronts. But we can see, perhaps more clearly, how Learning Development can be understood as an expression, in higher education, of this ‘crisis of expectation’ itself. We might therefore begin to think of Lucy’s practice of Learning Development in this case as a response to, or expression of, the crisis of expectation in higher learning.

The next ‘crisis’ outlined in chapter 3 related to the case of Eleanor, the nursing student who wanted to know more about research methods, an area of teaching beyond that usually offered by Lucy and her colleagues, but which Lucy felt was within her capacity to teach. This invoked in Lucy a sudden doubt about whether she was over-stepping, intruding on the prerogative of the nursing academics, a ‘crisis of legitimacy’ – ‘Is this permitted?’. We revisited this scenario again in chapter 8 and saw how the doubts sown in that tutorial reverberated beyond its confines, when on reflection Lucy considered the repercussions of this hitherto unrealised boundary between her own practices and the teaching and learning practices of others. This was used in that chapter as an example of ‘becoming reactive’.

The case of the crisis of legitimacy is, like the preceding crisis of expectation, a manifold event that cannot be reduced entirely to the short sequence of actual events that took place in the tutorial room, which is merely the moment at which Lucy’s

perceptive and conceptual faculties became aware of it. Where the crisis of expectation revolves around a sense of ‘falling short’, the crisis of legitimacy moves in the opposite direction, revolving around a sense of ‘over-reaching’, of going beyond what is legitimate or permitted. Why then does Lucy do this? As we saw in the discussion of modes in chapter 11, Lucy and Eleanor ‘enter composition’ with one another – their capacities to teach/learn are found to be complementary – their modes are compatible – and their interaction as teacher/student moves both to ‘further perfection’ engendering a feeling of ‘joy’. For Lucy, this complementarity of capacities is immediately disrupted by the anxiety (Spinoza’s ‘sadness’) induced by the sense of over-reach, the crisis of legitimacy, which disrupts the habitual (for Lucy) act of engagement with the student. This sense of ‘decomposition’ continues long after the tutorial itself (as sketched in chapter 8), and again a seemingly isolated episode (a lecture, a tutorial, a meeting) can once again be seen as facets of wider spatio-temporal *events*. In addition, we can see in this case an illustration of a force being removed from what it can do, and indeed chapter 8 takes Nietzsche’s analysis as its focus. The resolution of the resulting discomfiture (the sense of being an *interloper*) can be achieved by the seeking of some form of authorisation, and perhaps Lucy could find a way to ‘let go’ and ‘have done’ with the situation as described in the account at the start of chapter 8 by picking up the telephone and discussing it directly with one of the lecturers on the Nursing programme. To do so would enable Lucy to reposition herself as a legitimate *agent*, authorised to act on behalf of the disciplines. This may well salve the ennui, but it must be recognised that in doing so, Lucy is acknowledging her subservience to the disciplines in this aspect of teaching and learning. However, this may be no bad thing: to acknowledge a disparity in power is not the same as capitulating to it blindly. A recognition of the *insomnia* induced by the experience of this act of over-reach can instead be seen as an example of ‘acting her reaction’, of acknowledging the space where her own force and the force of the disciplines commingle, and actively withdrawing her own force from this front line. If she was to receive a rebuke from her academic colleague for this act of apparent over-reach (perhaps there are particular nuances in the teaching of research methodology on that course that Lucy is not aware of), it is for Lucy to formulate a response in turn; but it may well be the case that the colleague in question would assent to Lucy’s acting in this way with their students (it being in the department’s interest for their students to do well). In either case, Lucy’s actions have helped formulate a new boundary, with the Learning Developers and the discipline coming to a new

arrangement, the substitution of an old obligation for a new one – that is, a form of *innovative* practice as outlined in chapter 9. We see here the scope for Learning Development to change, to evolve in response to its changing environment. Recognising limits to the scope of Learning Development can thereby be seen positively, as providing the ‘habitual enframing’ (chapter 6) required for continued action. In this way, we can view Learning Development, at least in Lucy’s case, as a continual testing of legitimacy across a range of teaching and learning practices.

The final example detailed in chapter 3 involved Lucy’s involvement in a strategic cross-departmental meeting in which the consensus to identify and intervene with students on the basis of protected characteristics came into conflict with Lucy’s own (and only vaguely articulated) system of beliefs. This was characterised as a ‘crisis of conduct’ – is this the right thing to do? In chapter 9 this scenario was used to highlight the way that decisions regarding actions ‘in the moment’ can have longer-term consequences, as the powers of reflection – active synthesis – are brought to bear on a ‘snap’ decision, finding that decision wanting, lacking, ‘falling short’ of an ideal subsequently conjured up by Lucy herself. This leads to a cascading of *ressentiment*, of Lucy being unable to ‘let go’ of the moment, leading her to be drawn into a reactivity that impedes her capacity to further engage on the issue in a positive way.

Once again, the meeting in which all of this took place is merely the conduit through which the manifold elements of the *event* are funnelled and actualised as part of Lucy’s practice. This event also continues beyond the meeting itself, not least (for Lucy) in the form of Lucy’s own reactivity. In a way, Lucy’s inability to let go of her actions achieves the opposite of what she might seek to do in terms of remedying or atoning for what she sees perhaps to be a failure of character through ‘critical self reflection’. Far from understanding her actions and being able to accommodate and assimilate them in some way into her sense of self (confabulation), the act of reflecting, on focusing on a representation, serves in fact to hold the act outside of herself, to maintain its externality. In continuing to reflect, continuing to hold on she is, in effect, prolonging the crisis. In the act of holding on to her actions, and *withholding* any accommodation with them, she is not confronting her actions at all, but maintaining her flight from them. Hence, reflection, as a form of representation, of distancing, serves to maintain the separation of herself from her actions.

What could she do differently next time, on the next throw of the dice? What kind of solutions can be engendered that are different to the current state of affairs? Perhaps a signal of the disparity in the relations of power for Lucy 'in the moment' itself was her physiological state – flushing skin, stiffening jaw, quickening heart-rate. A sensitivity to her own unconsciously-responsive body, her own limbic responses,⁸⁹ may have alerted her consciousness, allowing herself to draw back from reaction, to withdraw her force from the fray. In this sense, her limbic response can be read as a sign, which leaves a (physiological) trace. Of course, this is somewhat speculative, and dwelling on this additional 'failure' of sensitivity would not perhaps be helpful to Lucy overall after the fact. Nevertheless, there is a broader point to be made about the role of the 'perceiving body' as an agent in its own right, rather than simply thinking of the body as the dumb vessel in which Lucy carries around her rational thoughts.

To 'act her reaction' would perhaps involve Lucy attempting to understand why she did what she did instead of dwelling on the act of the doing itself. The relation of forces in the room in which the meeting took place, and the relations of forces around that project and its ethos formulated long before the meeting was even called, were not equal and balanced, but asymmetrical, and weighted heavily against Lucy's own perspectives. To recognise this is not to make excuses for Lucy, but to perceive the capacity for her own actions to be circumscribed by the disparity in power at play. In addition, the as-yet-unformulated nature of her own objection within the meeting itself could be recognised in terms of the immanent, temporal nature of the formation of her thoughts on the matter. That she completed that ethical formulation *after* the meeting (through unrelenting reflection on what took place), and then (in effect) retrospectively applied it to her own actions in the meeting is somewhat unfair on herself, to say the least. And yet that is one of the consequences of representation, as it 'de-particularises' the formulation of Lucy's own ethical stance and enables her to apprehend it as a universal essence that she has somehow failed to grasp sufficiently. But as we have seen, our thoughts, including our stance on matters of ethics, do not pre-exist, fully formed outside ourselves. On the contrary, they are formulated *through our bodies, and in the world*, immanently. To acknowledge that Lucy lacked certainty in the face of such

89 Echoing the recent work of Steve Watson at the University of Cambridge (personal communication).

complexity, and for her to acknowledge this herself, is not to condemn her for some kind of failure, but to recognise that, when pushed out of our established routines, we are uncertain beings. We can perhaps begin to think of Learning Development for Lucy as involving the immanent and continuing formulation of an ethical stance in response to the complex interplay of the forces, power and imperatives of the various actors she is implicated with in her practices.

This chapter has sketched some potential responses to the three normative crises described in the first part of the thesis: the crises of expectation, legitimacy and conduct. The previous chapter established that it is these crises that provide the very essences of Lucy's Learning Development practice. In this way, Learning Development for Lucy can be thought of as a response to the expectations of others regarding the capacities for teaching and learning as a dyadic pair; as a continual process of testing the legitimacy of certain teaching and learning practices; and as the immanent formulation of an appropriate ethical response to the complexities of force and relation between the various actors across the university. These features can be seen to be expressed in the case, but they cannot be taken to be generic features of Learning Development in a definitive way or as general rules, however tempting it may be to come to that conclusion. The method of dramatisation provides the means for any Learning Developer to determine the parameters of their own practice at any given moment, and in so doing provide the means for Learning Development to live and breathe as evolving, creative responses to the challenges of higher learning.

Chapter 17: Tendencies in the practice of Learning Development

It has been a busy year. Most of the students are starting to go home now, once their final assignments have been handed in and exams have been sat. My focus will now shift on to the various summer projects, and onto the students who continue to study over the summer – postgraduates, nurses, those on compressed courses. The work never ends, but at least in the summer there is some respite from the relentlessness of term time. It has been an interesting year for me, in reflecting on my practices. I have a better idea of Learning Development now, a more useable understanding. I've started to see the wider patterns that underly the particular things that happen day to day, the recurring themes that constitute my working life. I think an awareness of these patterns is going to help me put the work that I do into context a bit, to provide a bit of perspective. It's easy to get caught up in the moment, to react to situations in isolation and to blame myself – or others – when things don't go quite how I think they should. I think I'm becoming a little more forgiving of my own shortcomings. I try my best, and sometimes that's not enough, I get things wrong. But I've come to realise that what goes 'wrong' is not entirely down to what I'm doing, but with the wider situation in which my work sits. There are so many competing interests in higher education – the students, academics, the university management – they all want different things from me, often at the same time. I've found that a lot of what I'm doing is negotiating between them; or else working together with one or another to achieve some kind of mutual aim. And all the while I'm constantly trying to come to grips with what the right thing is to do, which is difficult when the 'right thing' is different to different people in different situations. It's a complex job, no doubt about it. But ultimately it is worthwhile.

Where does the present analysis leave our understanding of Learning Development in UK higher education? It was stated from the outset in the Introduction that the purpose of the thesis was not to document the roles, activities and undertakings of Learning Developers – that is, to examine what Learning Developers *actually do*; but to situate

the analysis at a different scale of observation, in order to obtain insight into the conditions which structure Learning Development in one particular instance of its practice (that is, through the narrative device of Lucy). Hence, although we have examined some of the situations that Learning Developers find themselves in (through Lucy's experiences), documenting the scope of Learning Development activity has not been the focus of the present study.

Focusing on a particular instance of practice – and a narrative, fictionalised one at that – does not lend itself to the formulation of general conclusions about that practice, but that does not preclude us from highlighting those features of Learning Development that we have determined in Lucy's case. As discussed in chapter 14, these features cannot be considered in any way *predicative* of Learning Development in any kind of definitive way (that is to say, defining features of its practice); but they can be considered *tendencies* towards which Lucy's own practices move towards. Insofar as such practices and experiences are shared by other practitioners (who can judge this for themselves), such tendencies may resonate as relevant or insightful, and may be found to constitute so-called 'universal singularities', attractors which Learning Development more broadly tends towards. With that caveat aside (which serves also to reiterate the ontological approach we have been taking), let us look at where all of this has led us.

Chapter 16 has already sketched out and discussed the key tendencies, or attractors, that structure the virtuality of Lucy's practice, and which in turn give rise to the patterns of expression in her actual practices. These derive from the three 'crises of normativity' first introduced in chapter 3. To lay them out again in one place, we can summarise such tendencies as follows:

- Learning Development as a response to, or expression of, crises of *expectation* in higher learning;
- Learning Development as a continual testing of *legitimacy* across a range of teaching and learning practices; and
- Learning Development as involving the immanent and continuing formulation of an ethical stance, the right *conduct*, in response to the complex interplay of the forces, power and imperatives of various actors.

In order to extend the analysis further, and to tie together some of the key themes of the thesis, let us now elaborate on each one of these tendencies in turn. Rather than restate the analysis presented in chapter 16, which brought together the cases experienced by Lucy recounted throughout the thesis, what follows will seek to draw out some broader aspects of each, and in so doing will identify the actions of the Learning Development practitioner as tending towards the *Interstitial* (regarding expectations); *Interlacing* (with respect to negotiating legitimacy); and *Virtuous* (with respect to conduct). Each tendency will be discussed in turn.

In respect of the first tendency, which sees Learning Development as involving a response to issues around expectations in higher learning, we can think of the Learning Developer's role, in whatever specific activity they undertake, to involve at least in part *a negotiation of expectations around teaching and learning*. This implies of course, that people expect things, and further, that different people expect different things; and further still, that the Learning Developer will seek to take it upon themselves (or be expected) to navigate, explain, resolve, understand, etc., these differing expectations.

In looking at the case of Lucy, we can see that this arises on account of the Learning Developer's structural positioning within the university. The discussion of topology in chapter 14 outlined a way of thinking about the structure of a system as a manifold; that is, in terms of the way it can change. In the structure of the university, it was suggested that this manifold for Learning Developers can be considered in terms of the way their practices intersect between three 'attractors' (or singularities) – learners/students; institutions/the 'university'; and the academic and professional disciplines. Taken together, we have discussed Learning Development in terms of having three 'degrees of freedom' around *particular expressions*⁹⁰ of these entities. This provides a convenient (though arbitrary) analytical lens for the consideration of how Learning Developers apprehend and negotiate the various expectations that relate to their teaching and learning practices.

90 To emphasise once again, the value in identifying the attractors is not to draw general conclusions about the characteristics of 'students' or 'institutions', but to consider how they manifest in the particular.

The clearest distinction is from the students themselves. Learning Developers are teachers, and students are seen as learners, whose ‘learning’ is to be ‘developed’.⁹¹ From the student’s own perspective, there is often very little to distinguish the Learning Developer standing in front of them from either one of their lecturers or someone from ‘student services’. From the standpoint of the students, then, Learning Development might be seen as a quasi-academic (‘discipline’) student support (‘institution’) role.

Most often separated from the disciplines and their departments themselves (although, as we have seen from the brief overview presented in the introduction, this is not *necessarily* always the case), Learning Developers will typically find themselves outside of the departmental (and often faculty) structures, located instead in centralised departments such as libraries or student services, or in stand-alone centres. In addition to organisational/institutional separation, Learning Developers can be distinguished from discipline (department/faculty)-based colleagues in other ways: Learning Developers are typically not directly involved in the assessment regime, and their epistemological orientation away from propositional (‘content’) knowledge – ‘knowing that’ – and towards ‘knowing how’ (to write, to study for exams; to critically analyse), further reinforces their disconnection from those teaching and researching in the subject disciplines and the professions, which are seen to comprise a ‘body of knowledge’. This separation from the subject disciplines can be further reinforced when Learning Developers are employed on professional rather than academic contracts, indicating a difference in status.

And yet, Learning Developers do not see themselves as simply being ‘institutional entities’ either. As we also saw in the Introduction, there is a strong and arguably growing sense of Learning Development’s distinctive identity as a field of practice, and perhaps even as a discipline in its own right. This sense of identity works against identification with institutional aims and objectives, or of simply being seen as a tool of the institution, particularly the ‘neoliberal, marketised academy’. On this latter point, Learning Development’s strong sense of offering authentic ‘empowerment’ to students puts them at odds with any notion that they are somehow in the thrall of institutional control.

91 Nomenclature is discussed in detail in the Introduction.

I would suggest the key concept pertaining to ‘expectations’ is that of effectiveness (and ineffectiveness), from the Latin *efficere*, ‘to accomplish’ (OED). To meet an expectation deriving from one or another of the actors is to be seen as effective, to have accomplished something of value to them. For the expectation not to be met – as when the thing that is valued *exceeds the capabilities* of the Learning Developer to produce – the opposite effect is produced – ineffectiveness, non-accomplishment. I would argue that crises of effectiveness might be seen as a feature of higher education, not so much due to any inherent lack in any of its features or functions, but rather to do with the competing and often opposing imperatives of its actors. The university insists on more students to meet its financial aims; the disciplines/departments (in the absence of more resources) resist this to ensure the quality of their offer and the health and wellbeing of academic staff. Learning Developers find themselves implicated in this conflict of imperatives with expectations on both sides: from the Institution: ‘Ensure quality by improving student learning’; from the Disciplines: ‘Help us with our unsustainable teaching loads’. The imperatives in this sketched example seem on the surface to be in agreement, but this is only because the Learning Developer is positioned as an *interstitial actor*⁹² between the conflicting demands, a go-between, if you will, that permits a *detente* of the conflict between Institution and Discipline, and instead places the burden of *expectation* upon the Learning Developer instead. To sketch another example: from a Learner: ‘I just want to pass my essay and the question doesn’t make any sense’; from the Discipline: ‘Help my weaker students pass their assessments’. The Learning Developer’s interstitial role seeks to please both parties, whose aims once again appear to converge; but the Learning Developer cannot help finding themselves side with the student that the essay brief is poorly explained; and cannot also help side with their academic colleague that the student is in fact ill-equipped to deal with the demands of academic work. The conflict between student and academic is thus forestalled due to the intercession of the Learning Developer, upon whom the *expectation* is diverted from both Learner and Discipline. Hence the Learning Developer’s actions are driven in no small part from a fear of under-performance (ineffectiveness; non-accomplishment), the consequences of which are not only directed upon their own domain of action, but which have *wider implications* in the negotiation of wider conflicts. The designations of ‘Hero’ (effective) and ‘Martyr’ (ineffective, though noble in defeat) as outlined in chapter 3 are fitting appellations in such

92 Interstitial – the space between structures or objects (OED)

potentially fraught circumstances. Although the examples may vary, and indeed vary in complexity (these have been fairly straightforward examples), the *topology of the structure* of the higher education setting in this regard should, I hope, by now be clear.

Turning to the second tendency, that of Learning Development as a continual testing of legitimacy across a range of teaching and learning practices, we see here a different set of orientations, namely *parsing the legitimacy of particular actions*, and *negotiating authority*. The inference in this characterisation is that there are varying degrees of authority and power at play in the higher education setting (pertaining to who is permitted to do what, where, and when), and that the Learning Developer plays an active (rather than passive) role in determining the intersection of these loci of power, at least with respect to their own practices.

In the examples we encountered with Lucy, this particular issue was expressed in terms of *boundaries*, the space where one locus of authority begins and another ends. More specifically, where the authority of the Learning Developer themselves extends into, or recedes from, the authority of other actors with respect to teaching and learning practices. We can perhaps think about this more clearly in terms of the inherent instability of Learning Development as a category in higher education. Where no formal, official boundaries have been established, the way is open for their negotiation – or their being contested. In chapter 3, the link was made between the crisis of legitimacy and the crisis of expectation, with the latter being seen as occurring when the Learning Developer reaches the limits of their capabilities; and the former when the capabilities of the Learning Developer extend into the established territory of another, when there is seen to be *over-reach*.

Where the key concept for expectation was identified as effectiveness (or accomplishment), the concept that encapsulates these notions of legitimacy and over-reach is that of ‘appropriateness’ (or inappropriateness). In seeking to parse the boundary of what is legitimate, the Learning Developer is seeking to establish arrangements that are in some way *appropriate*. Both common English senses of the term ‘appropriate’ derive from the Latin *appropriāre*, to render ownership (OED). This foregrounds the notion that whatever is ‘appropriate’ is *deemed as such* by some form of authority. In higher education, this then brings us to the question of who is authorised to

decide what a Learning Developer should or should not be doing. Once more, the interplay between the various actors/attractors in their particular manifestations can be seen to illuminate the problem.

One particular aspect of the way Learning Developer's interact with the various actors within the university that is worth highlighting here, as it provides a counterpoint to the notion of Learning Development practitioners adopting the role of what in the previous part of the discussion on expectations I have characterised as an *Interstitial Actor*, that is to say, as one who is situated between others and negotiates between them in some way. By contrast, what the crisis of legitimacy and its emphasis on appropriateness brings to the fore is the way the Learning Developer can move to become an *Interlacing Actor*, one who mixes or intermingles with another, effectively joining their forces together. We have seen in chapter 16 that such mixing and mingling of forces can be understood in Spinozan terms as one force 'entering into composition' with the other, through their complementary capacities. Such a move is of course not unique to the Learning Developer, but acting in this way to increase their force, their power, nevertheless represents another aspect of the topological structure of Learning Development that I am seeking to outline here.

To provide an example of this kind of interlacing, we can imagine a situation where the Learning Developer is seen by one actor to 'over-reach' themselves. First let's simply take the example we have been using throughout the thesis, of the student who wanted to understand research methods. Perhaps the lecturer is uncertain as to the *bone fides* of the Learning Developer (let's say it is Lucy again – we know her well by now), and asks her if this was appropriate. It is reasonable to imagine that if asked such a thing, Lucy's response would be to attempt an interlacing of her actions with the interests of another actor, in this case the student herself. By citing the interests of the student, and interlacing her own agency with that of the student's, the Learning Developer achieves an increase in her own power. This can be seen to be a form of appropriation (as outlined in chapter 14 in the discussion of signs), which could arguably be justified by citing the student's own request for assistance – that is to say, their complementary capacities (entering into composition with one another).

To cite a second example, perhaps an academic manager questions the appropriateness of the Learning Developer working with staff on developing their writing skills: ‘I thought your remit was to work with students...?’, they might ask. ‘Yes, that’s true’, responds the Learning Developer (in a Nietzschean *riposte*), ‘But the staff in the Design Faculty have made it clear that our workshops have been useful to them in terms of their research productivity, and many participants will also be working with students themselves, so they can cascade some of the writing tips we’ve given them to their own students’. Here we have a double-interlacing, appropriating the force of both the discipline/department *and* their students. In both of these examples, we see an interlacing of force as a means to defend the actions of the Learning Developer against an accusation of over-reach. In both cases, the responses given can be seen to be something other than simple ‘reactivity’, for the Learning Developer is seeking to maximise their force and apply it further, not resile from action and blame their accuser. The objective, it would seem, is to extend their own boundaries into fresh territory, so that future actions of the same kind are not seen as ‘over-reach’ at all, but as the new way of doing things. We saw from the discussion in chapter 9, that the concept of *innovation* comprises the determination of a new arrangement, the substitution of an old obligation for a new one, and by acting as an *Interlacing Actor*, the Learning Developer can be thought of as enacting a form of innovation by means of entering into composition with other actors, and using their combined force to consolidate the new obligation. This highlights and foregrounds the way the role of the Learning Developer is inherently evolutionary in nature, not a static, fixed *ideal* form; it also demonstrates that any evolution is achieved through a co-mingling of force.

The final tendency we have identified relates to the ‘crisis of conduct’, and sees the Learning Developer continually formulating and reformulating their ethical stance as they negotiate the power relations inherent in their practices. In a sense, this final tendency stands above and in relation to the previous two, as it represents an effort on the part of the Learning Developer to judge whether their actions, in any aspect of their work, correspond with their own values. Chapter 16 has already identified this particular tendency as being a form of *virtue*, in the sense that Spinoza understands the term. Recall from chapter 16 that for Spinoza, virtue is about acting to seek one’s own advantage, to stay in existence – so this is not quite the common-sense understanding of virtue that supposes there to be an externally-generated moral framework that one must

adhere to in order to be considered virtuous. For the Learning Developer as *Virtuous Actor*, the locus of virtue is on the practitioner herself.

Lucy's experience of the strategy meeting has been used extensively throughout the thesis to explore relations of power (chapter 3); physiological responses to the anxieties those relations can engender (chapter 16); and, most importantly, the manifestation of *ressentiment* (chapter 9). Let us therefore briefly consider another example of this 'crisis of conduct'. Imagine that a Learning Developer, Lucy, has just finished a two hour shift of back-to-back tutorials and has some teaching preparation to do before going home for the day. She is confronted by a student as she comes out of the tutorial room. The student asks if he can talk with her about his essay. Tired and mindful of the work she has to complete before she can go home, Lucy responds to the student as politely and as clearly as she can that she is not available and that he should come back to the allotted 'drop in' session tomorrow. The student replies that his assignment is due in today, and could she please spare just five minutes to look over his work, 'to see if I'm on the right track'. From experience Lucy knows that this will take longer than five minutes. She also suspects that if the assignment is due today, there is little that she can do to really help the student, particularly if the quality of the work is poor. She once again politely declines to sit down with the student, explains that she has other work to do, and takes her leave. The student is clearly angry, or disappointed, or both, and Lucy leaves with the feeling that she should have seen the student after all. Was this the right thing to do?

Given that there is no externally-derived moral framework to adhere to, Lucy in this instance is left to determine her own ethical stance as to whether her actions are somehow right or wrong. The action has already been taken, the dice have been thrown, so any consideration of 'ethics' in this scenario is formulated retrospectively, reflectively. She could, of course, simply decide not to worry about such matters at all. Even so, Lucy cannot fully ignore the experience she is having – or more specifically, she cannot readily remove herself from the emotional-physical responses that she is having – her pace quickening, her mind racing, her heart rate increasing. As discussed in previous chapters (3; 9; 16), Lucy's response to the student, like so much about her practice, was very much 'in the moment', a snap judgement, unrehearsed and improvised; what is occurring in the aftermath of that snap judgement represents a shift from a passive to an active synthesis of time (chapter 7), from what might be thought of

as an habitual response to a reflective one. The habits here take the form of Lucy's experience – she doesn't know the consultation with this particular student will take more than five minutes; she doesn't know that what she can offer probably wouldn't help this particular student. But these have been her experiences before, and hence they come into play when she perceives a repetition of previous conditions. This highlights something of the blurred nature of habit and reflection (discussed separately and at length through chapters 6 and 7), insofar as some forms of 'reflection' are also somewhat 'habitual' in nature; that is, even as we 'reflect in the moment', that reflection is informed by habits of reflection, leading us down familiar paths of thought where we know (or expect to know) what we will find there.

We might begin to understand this situation in a more nuanced way by returning to the discussion of traces and signs in chapter 14. Recall the notion that a sign as the 'trace of a fluctuation', which we become aware of as we come to sense forces in relation (chapter 14). Signs are thus an indication of life itself, of its immanent and perpetual unfolding. While 'rationalising' the experience of refusing the student is entirely viable for Lucy, the physiological consequences cannot easily be dismissed. A physical response such as this can be read as a *sign*, as a trace of a fluctuation, and Lucy's sensitivity to such signs can be seen as characteristic of her practice of Learning Development. To notice that an exchange is unpleasant is not a banal observation, but an interpretive act, the act of the 'Egyptologist' as they engage with 'enigmas which point to something hidden'. What is concealed in such an unpleasant exchange? I would suggest it is the trace of a *decomposition*, of two or more forces entering into relation and finding their capacities are not complementary with one another. Furthermore, in chapter 14 we also saw that traces can re-emerge from the psyche unbidden, indicating that an instance of unpleasantness in an exchange with a student can be seen not simply as an isolated occurrence, but as an *event*, with spatio-temporally complex implications. What this tells us is that the limbic response of the practitioner to an incident is enfolded into other incidents, other occurrences of a similar nature – refusal, anger, patient explanation, disagreement, contesting over time and resources – and that these aspect of the Event are 'evoked', brought into the latest iteration.

If we accept this analysis, the consequences for the ethics of Learning Development practice, for the *Virtuous Actor* appear revolve around two aspects – the sensitivity of

the practitioner to the traces in the first instance; and the interpretive capacity of the practitioner to situate such traces in relation to past traces. These capabilities can be seen as the necessary components of an effective *evaluation*, and it highlights the double nature of the evaluative process – not only that of reflective interpretation (consciously linking together the various skeins of traces), but also the requirement of the initial sensitivity to those traces, a sensory-perceptive faculty⁹³. This recalls the discussion of monadism in chapter 15, and signals once more the inter-woven nature of the process of Configuration, where the outside and the inside are blurred together to form something of a whole, which *in-corp-orates* (manifests in an embodied way) and implicates the ego of the practitioner into that which they are evaluating ('Confabulation', chapters 14 and 16).

As outlined in chapter 11, to have an *Idea* of something, for Deleuze, is not simply to see the thing as it is, but to comprehend the conditions for its becoming, its continuation, its variation or evolution, and, inevitably, its demise. Hence our *Idea* of Learning Development has presented an account that has sought not to document or describe what Learning Development is, or what Learning Developers do, but which instead sought to situate the analysis in a way that comprehends the conditions for its becoming – prior to the *actual*, in the domain of the *virtual*. In so doing, the present thesis has, sought to provide an insight into the conditions which give rise to a particular instance of Learning Development practice, and has shown how this can be achieved, through the method of vice-diction, in such a way as to avoid the pitfalls of the Universal Picture, of Platonism.

93 Another fruitful thread to follow here (which space does not permit) would be Klossowski's insight in his reading of Nietzsche that the *interpreter* at any given moment is not the "I" of the ego, but rather the dominant drive at that particular moment. Klossowski talks of the 'grammatical fiction of "I"' (Klossowski, 2003).

Conclusion

1. Overview

2. Summary of key lines of argument

3. Implications for Learning Development as a field of practice

4. Wider implications: professional, philosophical and methodological

1. Overview

What Idea can we have of Learning Development? In the introduction, we looked at various characterisations of Learning Development as a field of practice. Each contributed something to our understanding, and we could have let things stand at that. What this thesis has endeavoured to show, however, is that the way Learning Development manifests – its practices, process and activities – is structured by its relations within the academy. In other words, the key purpose of the thesis was to examine in detail this underlying structure, and how it comes to shape Learning Development. Far from being a static entity, Learning Development has been shown to be dynamic and ever-changing – dramatic – and can be expressed in different forms in different contexts. There is no ‘ideal’ Learning Development. A current of Platonism in the way we commonly come to conceive of learning and teaching practices in higher education can lead us to act out certain assumptions about our practices – namely, that through a process of active reflection, we can somehow determine a correct course of action by comprehending such an ‘ideal’ form of practice. This thesis has argued that this set of assumptions is problematic, and has sought to show how; moreover, the thesis has attempted to engage with Learning Development from an entirely different ontological standpoint, summarised in the *Method of Dramatisation* of Gilles Deleuze, which in turn is informed by a rich array of philosophical concepts. In so doing, the thesis has attempted to step back from the actual, manifest practices of Learning Development and into the ‘virtual’, unmanifest conditions that structure such practices, what Barnett refers to as the ‘deep underlying structures’ (Barnett, 2017, p. 81) of the university. A detailed summary of the argument developed in the present thesis is presented in the following section.

2. Summary of the key lines of argument

Part One and Part Two of the thesis were structured around the play of three key concepts relating to the practice of Learning Development. These concepts, introduced in chapter 3, are the *Particular Case*; the *Aggregate View*; and the *Universal Picture* of practice. The meanings of these terms were sketched loosely, and by means of example, using the narrative device of ‘Lucy’ as a means to explore the concepts in a concrete, practical setting. In concluding the analysis, it might be helpful to return to these three concepts now and discuss them in light of the thesis as a whole.

The crux of the argument presented in Part One related to the relation between the Particular Case and the Aggregate View. In the five chapters that comprise the first part of the thesis, I argued that when Lucy becomes aware of her own practices (through various ‘normative crises’, as described), the particularity of her own case of practice was immediately brought into relation with the putative and actual practices of others (practices other than her own, but with something shared between them). What makes the particular ‘part-icular’ is that it is conceived in terms of its being a component part in some wider whole. So to become aware of the Particular Case of practice is to necessarily begin a process of aggregation, to see that practice as part of a set of practices shared with others.⁹⁴ It is for this reason that we can label the so-called crises experienced by Lucy as ‘normative’, for there is immediately evoked in the crisis a sense of what may or may not be ‘normal’ in each instance, alongside a sense of obligation to conform with that norm, whatever it may be.⁹⁵

In chapter 4, I characterised the Particular Case as a “singular, individual perspective on some event or other”, and the Aggregate View as an “engagement with multiple views and perspectives”, and in chapter 5 “an accumulation of Particular Cases to form a composite picture”. An understanding of the latter, the Aggregate View, is perhaps the

94 There is shared ground with Wittgenstein here, insofar as thinking of a practice as a practice immediately and necessarily evokes the practices of others in relation to one’s own. Hence, there are no ‘private practices’ that can be known as such, only shared, public practices governed by rules, both tacit and explicit (see Stirk 1999, p. 44; Wittgenstein 1958, §199 and §202)

95 See De Landa (Lecture: Deleuze, Morphogenesis, and Population Thinking, 2011), who identifies three drivers (or replicators) of evolution: the genetic template which is chemically coded and transmitted materially; mimetic behavioural codes transmitted through imitation; and normative behavioural codes transmitted through enforced obligation. In casting the crises of expectation, legitimacy and conduct as ‘normative’, we are therefore coming to understand them in terms of obligations to act in certain ways.

easier of the two concepts to comprehend, at least initially, for it appears to consist of a common-sense process of taking many individual elements and combining them into a kind of whole. Leibniz's understanding of the aggregate sets out the concept as a two-fold mental process: that is, the perception of elements standing in some kind of relation; and an act of invention in which the perceiver comes to see those elements as comprising a whole (Lodge 2001, p. 475). Aggregation, in this sense, is an act of perception. Hence we appended the term 'view' to the concept in order to arrive at an Aggregate View, which we can express more precisely here now as *the constituted appearance of a collected whole*. It is the perceiver that constitutes and collects, and its status is inherently perspectival and therefore *apparent* to the perceiver. This is an important aspect of the concept, for any aggregation can only ever be from the viewpoint of the aggregator and should not be considered in absolute terms, but only ever the product of their perceptions at a *particular* point in time and in a *particular* place.

The concept of the Particular Case is perhaps more slippery, for as we have seen, its very first incarnation is as the inaugural stage in a process of aggregation. But as Part Two of the thesis detailed (particularly in chapter 6), there exists a reality of the Particular Case that exists prior to its expression in reflective thought, the virtual properties which shape the way practices can be actualised. The Part-icular immediately invokes the whole to which it is connected, but there is also something in the term that evokes the prospect of something distinct and whole within itself. The part stands distinct from the whole, distinguishable *as* a part, and not to be immediately subsumed into the whole. This is why it is important to append the term Case to the Particular, for the Case speaks of the distinct circumstances or specified aspects of a wider whole ("in this case"; "in the case of"), rather than assuming that the whole contains those parts essentially (Deleuze, 2004, p. 56). We could think, as Deleuze suggests that Hegel does, of an aggregated whole as consisting of all the parts that comprise it as comprising it in essence. Hence all the parts of that aggregated whole are *essential* to its being whole: "the whole is itself and the part" (Deleuze, 2004, p. 56). Logically speaking, if you lose a part, then you lose the whole, as all parts are essential. Deleuze insists, however, that essences cannot be separated from what is *inessential*, for it is by means of the inessential that essences may be distinguished from one another. Hegel's approach is to take the whole (as genus) as being infinitely large (completed) and to

specify downwards dialectally to arrive at the species and individuals that comprise that genus. Deleuze points to Leibniz, who works from the other direction, from the infinitesimally small upwards. Rather than determining the essential and eliminating the non-essential as our means of understanding a whole (by means of contradiction), Leibniz insists on the part(icular) as containing both essential and inessential properties with respect to the whole that it invokes, and that these properties are expressed *in the case*. Hence, if we examine Particular Cases alongside one another, we can specify the essence of something (say, practices) in a way that permits variation, differences and changes. By contrast, by working dialectically, we would instead be required to determine the essence of something (practices) by generalising on the basis of properties which we determine to be essential. We could only ever arrive at an understanding that was *generic*.

There is a further, (now obsolete) connotation of the term Case, with the Case being ‘a thing that befalls or happens to anyone; an event; a chance happening’ (OED). This additional meaning captures something of the circumstantial and historically determined nature of practices as potentially complex assemblages which implicate and involve each practitioner, something akin to Deleuze’s understanding of the Event. Taken together, we can thereby co-mingle these layers of meaning and can now understand the Particular Case as the *distinctive specification of the Event*. The Particular Case can be seen as both distinct and distinguishable, fully differentiated in the virtual, but also inherently lacking in clarity (undifferentiated) as its manifestation as an actual occurrence is not pre-determined. This is what Deleuze brings to our attention in Leibniz’s notion of the ‘distinct and obscure’ (Deleuze 1967), wherein something can be discerned and understood as an entity in itself (that is, they are distinct), but which nevertheless retains in itself the capacity to be expressed in a variety of ways which are only determined when they are actualised (that is, they remain obscure until given *particular* expression in the world).

In Lucy’s case, her own practices comprise the first of the related elements to be aggregated, the seed around which the others might crystallise. Such a crystallisation is an ‘act of invention’ undertaken by Lucy herself. It is she who constitutes the aggregate, folding into it whatever elements she perceives as being relevant. As argued in Part Two, any such act is itself partial, incomplete, and in itself represents a kind of

‘Particular Case’ of aggregation. This is because the elements that Lucy might perceive and aggregate together are never comprehensive or total, but are in fact limited by her own knowledge, experience, context, degree of engagement, and so on. Hence, when Lucy considers her own Particular Case of practice, she immediately begins a process of aggregation; in aggregating, Lucy can only ever produce a Particular Case of aggregation. She is, in a sense, trapped in her own particularity. Her Particular Case is merely the first element in a process of aggregation, and the aggregate she constitutes is merely a Particular Case of aggregation. Thus, Lucy cannot escape from her own inherent embodied limitations, and, as a consequence, seeks to invoke the means to do so – to transcend her own inhibiting particularity by identifying with something all-encompassing.

The Universal Picture was characterised in chapter 5 as involving “perceiving a thing or an event from an infinite number of perspectives, an aggregate-of-all-aggregates”. Part Two went on to explain that this Universal Picture is in fact a construct, indistinguishable from the Aggregate View except in terms of the way that Lucy experiences it, which is to say as *definitive*. This second part of the thesis took Lucy’s experiences and characterised them in terms of different conceptualisations of Practice – routinised and habitual (chapter 6); reflective and represented (chapter 6); reactive and potentially nihilistic (chapter 7); innovative and re-constituted (chapter 8); and finally ‘immanent’ and engaged (chapter 9). The purpose of this sequence of characterisations was to show the ‘psychic hydraulics’ involved in Lucy’s process of engagement with the world (further elucidated in chapters 13 and 15); to demonstrate the ‘lure’ of the Universal Picture; and to demonstrate the need for a fresh form of conceptualisation, which was then outlined in Part Three. I have argued that this construction of the Universal Picture through these stages is ‘metaleptical’, whereby Lucy anticipates its existence as a separate, independent entity, and thereafter experiences it as such. chapter 8 outlined two interlinked processes whereby this occurs (that is to say, actualised) – externalisation (the perception and experience of an internal function as an external function) and de-particularisation (the identification of a particular perception and/or experience with the generic phenomenon of which it is a part). Combined, these perceptual processes – which we may identify with a process of representation – transform a particular Aggregate View into a general Universal Picture. The effect of the Universal Picture is to manifest an apparently external framework against which

particular practices might be judged. In this way, we can at this point characterise the Universal Picture of practices as a *totalising framework of representation*.

The argument as developed through the first two parts of the thesis (chapters 1-10) is that Lucy, as a practitioner of Learning Development, moves through three stages as her practices become apparent to her and available for reflection: *The distinctive specification of the Event* (Particular Case) is first characterised as a *constructed appearance of a collected whole* (Aggregate View), which in turn, driven by the desires of the practitioner, manifests as a *totalising framework of representation* (Universal Picture). chapter 10 argued that the consequence of this process (what Nietzsche refers to as ‘Platonism’) is a slide into a nihilistic disavowal of one’s own agency as a practitioner in the face of domination by other forces.

Part Three argued that, far from being an inevitable process, there are conceptual tools available to Lucy that would resist the latter two stages in this process (aggregation, universalising), in order to linger in the first (particularity). Chief amongst these conceptual orientations is to give credence to the idea of practices (plural, and with a small p) as permitting us a degree of reflexive understanding without instead seeking always to move towards an idea of Practice (singular, and with a capital P). This is the procedure that Deleuze refers to as vice-diction. chapter 12 set out the Deleuzian *Method of Dramatisation* (vice-diction) in detail, and this was then applied to Lucy’s situation in chapters 14 and 16. chapter 14 discussed how the ‘specification of the adjunct fields’ in Deleuze’s concept of vice-diction could be understood in terms of ‘signs’ and the ‘event’, wherein the ‘event’ comprises the actual as structured by its virtualities, and ‘signs’ are the traces that remain of those virtualities following their actualisation. In order to understand how these concepts relate to Lucy’s practices (as detailed through Parts One and Two of the thesis), chapter 13 set out to demonstrate how sensing (perceiving) and sense-making (thinking) can be considered a unified process, such that an apprehension of signs becomes inter-twined with the practitioner’s own sense of themselves *as* practitioner. In this way, I sought to show that the process of reflective representation of practice detailed in Part Two (the Aggregate View, which in turn slips into the formation of a Universal Picture of practice) in turn precipitates a formation of the practitioner’s identity as somehow ‘distanced’ from the practice itself, reinforcing the Platonist ‘ideal’ of practice as somehow outside the practitioner, beyond them, forever out of reach; however this ‘chimerical invocation’ is in fact illusory (the

claim made in chapter 9), and chapter 13 sought to show why this is the case – that is, because the practitioner is immanent to their practice, and inseparable from it – the *particular* is inherently relational, considered within a monadic structure through which the practitioner can be seen to express their relations simultaneously ‘internally’ and ‘externally’, to the extent that these categories cease to be useful in advancing our thinking (chapter 15). As Yeats would have us contemplate: ‘How can we know the dancer from the dance?’.⁹⁶

The chapters comprising Part Three have also argued that through this procedure of examining the Particular Case in all of its aspects (or ‘adjunct fields’) we can come to consider it as being constituted not by certain properties, but rather by the virtual capacities inherent in the relations formed in each case (chapter 11), and that these capacities in turn structure the way the practices can manifest, or actualise. This ‘structure’ can be considered topologically (chapter 13), consisting of ‘topological invariants’ (or universal singularities) which correspond with the ‘degrees of freedom’ of the system, or ways that a system can change. In the ‘system’ of Learning Development, we have seen that three such ‘degrees of freedom’ (or ways that the practices of a Learning Developer can be changed) can be usefully discerned: namely in relation to the learner (students); in relation to the institution (the university); and/or in relation to the subject disciplines (and professions). All of the ‘normative crises’ in Lucy’s practice of LED outlined in the first 10 chapters represent moments her practices tend towards, and that these tendencies (alternatively ‘remarkable points’, or ‘singularities’) are actualisations of her relations with learners, the institution, or the disciplines (and combinations thereof).

The Idea of Learning Development that emerges from this analysis is one that is shaped by the practitioner herself, through her immanent engagement with her practices. There is scope for a wide range of particular expressions of this practice, and the thesis has not focused on the mechanics of one or another activity, but rather on the manifold structures – psychic and institutional – that underly such activities. The final two chapters draw these threads together, with chapter 16 revisiting the normative crises experienced by Lucy – of expectation, legitimacy, and conduct – in order to sketch some potential responses in light of the foregoing analysis. chapter 17 then extended

96 The final line of the poem *Among School Children* (1933).

this analysis further by outlining the way that Lucy's Learning Development practices constitute tendencies towards the *interstitial* (working between various actors and negotiating their relations); the *interlacing* (continually negotiating power relations through the formation of combinations and alliances); and the *virtuous* (involving sensitivity to and evaluation of traces). Having summarised the key lines of argument, it is worth now considering the implications for Learning Development itself, and for the application of Deleuzian thought to the problem of Learning Development, and educational research more broadly.

3. Implications for Learning Development as a field of practice

This thesis has at its centre the 'Idea' of Learning Development, conceived as a way of comprehending and understanding something of its associated practices in such a way that does require an appeal to the Universal Picture of essences, a current of thought referred to throughout as Platonism. When we seek to define Learning Development in terms of its general features, when we answer the question "What is...?", we run the risk of circumscribing the virtualities inherent in such work, of shutting down what we, as practitioners, are capable of doing. Definition becomes a boundary. To return to the quotation first presented in chapter 5, Deleuze remarks:

The question What is? prejudices the Idea as the simplicity of essence; it then becomes obligatory that the simple essence comprehends the inessential, and comprehends it in essence, thus contradicting itself (Deleuze, 1967)..

In other words, when we conceive something like Learning Development as consisting of it 'essential' features, then it follows that this essence is present and discernible in each and every instance (that is, the Universal Picture). But if every aspect of each and every instance must necessarily be 'essential', there can never be variation, nuance, differences between the various instances – the 'inessential' in Deleuze's formulation. For Learning Development, this would mean a bland uniformity across all Particular Cases. But as we have seen, this is simply not the case: The relationality inherent in Learning Development means that, although it may tend along certain lines, its capacity for variation is necessarily open-ended.

This has clear implications for the nascent professionalisation of Learning Development. As outlined in the Introduction, there is an imperative amongst Learning Development practitioners to ‘define’ Learning Development – lest it be defined by others. Professionalisation in this context implies the drawing up of bulwarks, *bastides*, boundaries in order to protect the integrity of these practices. We can see this boundary in evidence in other, more established professions – the doctor, the lawyer, and latterly, the teacher. The limits and expectations in these domains are enacted through formalised codes of practice, processes of registration, and compliance regimes. A boundary circumscribes virtualities in these professions in order to ensure that certain proscribed or unvalued practices *are not* actualised. The boundary here represents a *clear* demarcation of what is permissible, and is enforced through certain relations of power. But these are mature professions in the sense that the power relations at play within and around them have been stabilised (‘territorialised’ to use Deleuze and Guattari’s language). Readers may recognise attempts to stake out a stable territory in this way in other, related areas within higher education (e.g. in Educational Development, as detailed by Samuels, 2013). The imperative to codify accepted practices in this way can be seen as the price that must be paid (but to whom, and at what cost?) in order to occupy a certain niche within the higher education milieu. Arguably, Learning Development remains an open prospect, whose very openness is an indication that relations of power around it remain unresolved and contestable.

Instead of trying to be ‘clear and distinct’, we could perhaps instead aspire to be ‘distinct and obscure’. Distinct because, yes, there are a set of practices we can identify as Learning Development; and yes, there are common values that we share. It is certainly the case that Learning Development practices become clear as they are actualised – in our activities, our conversations, in the way we think about our work. But this is not the end of it. There remains a ‘virtuality’ to what we do – capacities that have yet to be actualised, or even anticipated. These are just as much a part of the reality of Learning Development, and represent the space through which our practices might evolve.

In practical terms, a Learning Developer such as Lucy – or myself – can come to an understanding of our own practices by tracing the dynamics that constitute what we do – the various actors, agents, forces, interests, power relations, that comprise our working

lives. This is an exercise in understanding our practice in the particular *case*. There is value in this, for in doing so, practitioners can then speak with one another (and our managers) and compare notes – not to uncover some universal ‘truth’ about such practices, but simply to lay them side by side in order to notice patterns, to share experiences, and to ‘speak alongside’ one another. The key to all of this, following Deleuze’s thinking, is to initially confine the scope of such an exercise to what is *actually the case*, rather than seeking to devise or uncover an assumed ‘universal’ understanding, a common denominator, or a generalised view of what constitutes the ‘true’ Learning Development. From that point, once a perspective is obtained, practitioners can venture outside, so to speak, and see what others have discovered – not to ‘get to the bottom of it’ (there is no bottom), but to note the *tendencies* across a range of practices. As has been argued at length, seeking a kind of fixed ‘ideal’ of practice is both illusory and unhelpful, as it sets one understanding against another in a futile process of contradiction without end (“this, not that”), whereas the interest should lie in the dynamics of relations, in the tendencies across practices, in the *drama*:

The clear and the distinct is the claim of the concept in the Apollonian world of representation; but beneath representation there is always the Idea and its distinct-obscure ground, a “drama” beneath all logos (Deleuze, 1967, p. 101)

The early work on professional certification for Learning Developers shows promise in this regard, as it sets out no ‘clear and distinct’, codified, criteria for the practitioner to ‘tick off’, no defined role or ‘core practices’, but rather a broad but coherent set of values for the practitioner to consider and respond to, which in turn is then assessed by members of the ALDinHE community (Briggs 2018). This at least provides the basis for a distinctive understanding of Learning Development, but retains the space for a necessary degree of obscurity and dynamism.

In their book *What is Philosophy* (1994) Deleuze and his collaborator Felix Guattari suggest that a concept moves through three ages as it develops (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p. 12), and we can include here the ‘concept’ of Learning Development. A concept starts in what the authors refer to as an age of the ‘encyclopedia’, in which the creation of a concept is a function of our individual perspective. Learning Developers can see an example of this whenever we examine our own individual practices of

Learning Development, for our day-to-day work is understood and known by ourselves, as reflective individuals, our myriad experiences accumulating much as the entries in an encyclopedia accumulate. The following age Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'pedagogy', and it is in this age that a concept (and indeed, a field of practice unified under that concept) truly lives: the concept as a creative force. We can see this unleashing of potential occur as Learning Developers engage and share practices with one another, our perspectival, individual experiences becoming part of a broader whole. Our various perspectives are enhanced and enriched as we learn from each other, creating (and actualising) a distinctive 'Learning Development'.

Finally, however, as it becomes more established, a concept can become prone to stasis, in what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the age of 'commercial professional training'. Here the concept is reduced to formulaic repetition, drained of life and energy, and conceived entirely in the actual without any sense of its inherent virtuality: entirely 'objective', but as a consequence merely a lifeless object. For Learning Developers, this would represent a stifling of our creative potential as we attempt to adhere to self-imposed criteria for compliance (or else criteria imposed by others), with none of the creative 'obscurity' which permits our evolution as practitioners.

Deleuze and Guattari, in their writing on philosophy, caution against shifting from the dynamics of 'pedagogy' into the disastrous formalisms of 'commercial professional training':

If the three ages of the concept are the encyclopedia, pedagogy, and commercial professional training, only the second can safeguard us against falling from the heights of the first into the disaster of the third – an absolute disaster for thought whatever its benefits might be, of course, from the viewpoint of universal capitalism (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 12)

There is in this a note of caution for us then, in the project of obtaining recognition, understanding and status for Learning Development. The 'absolute disaster of thought' represented by the third age of the concept is the point at which the concept of Learning Development, indeed the very notion of education which it seeks to underpin, ceases to be an active, living, entity and becomes instead the 'clear and distinct' object of

commodification and exchange, drained of its virtual capacities to evolve, ‘...overwhelmed by regimes of quality-control, coupled with an ultimately nihilistic, because empty, notion of excellence’ (Standish, 2008, p. 222). I have argued that it is better to determine what is distinctive about Learning Development work without recourse to any sense of there being a transcendent Universal understanding of Learning Development. Such an approach focuses our attention instead on the relational dynamics and tendencies inherent in each particular case of practice, and how they came to be that way. By recognising that there is no fixed ideal form of Learning Development, we preserve our virtual capacities to respond to our ceaselessly shifting world of higher education, and so too evolve along with our practices: Learning Development *lives*.

4. Wider implications: Professional, philosophical, methodological

In bringing to bear a significant current of Deleuze’s thought onto the subject of Learning Development and its practices, it is worth reflecting briefly on the philosophical and methodological implications of the current thesis. As might be expected of a thesis of this nature, the research and writing herein has not occurred in isolation. The vignettes for Lucy, for example, were drawn from my own experience, and the experiences of my Learning Development colleagues. As outlined in the Introduction, most of the Lucy narratives are based on real-world examples of Learning Development practices which have been fictionalised in order to provide a narrative, and to ensure that there was no misunderstanding that the thesis was in some way concerned with empirical investigation. My daily work and the insights of my colleagues have thus formed a kind of ‘learning laboratory’ which has informed and enriched my thinking.

Just as my work as a Learning Developer has informed my thesis, so too has the thesis begun to inform my work. In 2018, I co-presented a workshop for the Association of Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDinHE) in Leicester based around Deleuze’s *Method of Dramatisation*. In the context of increasing pressure upon Learning Developers to ‘evidence value’, the field is becoming increasingly professionalised, with the introduction in 2018 of a Certification scheme (Briggs 2018).

The workshop was a response to this professionalisation agenda, and sought to bring the work of the present thesis to the wider Learning Development community. The workshop was well attended and well received, indicating a degree of interest in theorising Learning Development. A paper outlining the application of Deleuze's ideas to Learning Development as developed in the present thesis was subsequently prepared with input from my workshop collaborator, Tracy Slawson. This paper was published in the conference special edition of the *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education* (Eyre and Slawson, 2018).

This activity has led to further work in interrogating the theoretical underpinnings of Learning Development practice, with an ALDinHE Regional Event, *Critical Practices in Learning Development*, which took place at De Montfort University in February 2019. This event was organised by myself and colleagues at De Montfort University, Leicester University and the University of Leeds. A workshop taking this theoretical work then took place at the 2019 ALDinHE conference in March 2019 at the University of Exeter. In both of these events, which looked at the theoretical stances of Learning Developers more broadly, the work of the current thesis plays a significant role. In particular, the importance of the *Particular Case* of practice, and the principle in vice-diction of 'specifying the adjuncts' – that is, laying cases side by side without attempting to resolve them into a unifying, universal framework – is central, although not necessarily articulated in such heavily theoretical terms as presented in the current thesis..

These examples are intended to show the impact and influence of the present thesis, and the applicability of some of Deleuze's ideas to Learning Development. As this work develops and matures, wider application of the *Method of Dramatisation* may begin to be considered. Certainly, although Deleuze does not present the *Method* as anything other than a way of thinking (or an idea of thought), there are clear methodological and theoretical implications within it that could potentially be applied to educational research more broadly. The approach of identifying cases, putting them into relation, and then determining their singular points has the potential to enhance the way researchers consider 'case studies'. It has been long considered in thinking on research methodology that case studies suffer from the weakness of 'limited generalisability', and as such can only offer limited insights (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). As

outlined in the present thesis Deleuze's thinking (and its antecedent in Leibniz) presents another way of considering the 'case', ontologically speaking. Rather than being somehow 'inferior' (compared to an Aggregate View, exemplified in the Systematic Review), Dramatisation/Vice-Diction instead encourages us to seek out the *relationality between cases* rather than accumulating the 'outcomes' of those cases to form an evidence base, with generalisable characteristics. The point is that the localised, particular, nature of the case provides the ontological starting point for consideration, moving outwards; whereas, traditionally the case is viewed as containing within it specific instances of certain *general* features. In this view, the case is merely a specific expression of a general feature, one that researchers are already looking for, already seeking to locate.

To outline one pertinent example of how this application of Deleuze's thought might apply in practice, we can turn to the work of Ronald Barnett on the University. In his 2011 book *Being a University*, Barnett presents a rich account of the importance of considering the way the university *becomes* what it is. In this book, and in much of his other work, he seeks to answer the question 'what is the university?'. As this thesis has discussed at length (particularly in Chapter 12), the question 'what is...?' itself is problematic; however, that does not doom Barnett's enterprise to understand and inform our thinking about what the university is and what it is for. His engagement with the concept of 'becoming' (and his employment of the work of Deleuze and Guattari, amongst others) indicates a willingness to challenge our understanding of the university at a deep level. One way in which he seeks to do this is through his engagement of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *multiplicity* (explored in Chapter 11 of the present thesis). Barnett contends that universities can be considered multiplicities - multi-dimensional institutional entities with no fixed essence, but which are continually transforming and crossing over into one another in complex ways (Barnett, 2011, p. 63). As he points out, this lack of a fixed central concept suggests that rather than simply *being* what they are, universities are continually in a state of *becoming*, and what we consider 'university' is a manifestation of the 'collective sense' that individual universities share in common.

It could be argued that Barnett's useful engagement of the term multiplicity doesn't quite go far enough. The concept of multiplicity as developed by Deleuze in *A Thousand Plateaus* (and which also appears in embryonic form in *The Method of*

Dramatization) is one that resists all forms of typological and categorical imperative (that is, the notion that there is a definable ‘essence’ of something); rather, multiplicities comprise the conditions whereby something *in particular* takes form, the structuring precursors from which discernible forms manifest. To say that multiplicities are ‘multiple’ in this context is to suggest that their variable manifest forms are not definably fixed and singular entities, but rather *virtualities* (Chapter 11) capable of a multitude of actual expressions in the world. However, to say that because of this the university has an ‘infinite number of dimensions’ (p. 63) is not quite in the spirit of the concept that Deleuze develops. To suggest the university has potentially infinite permutations is to say that the university could be anything at all, but this is not what Barnett would have us understand. The *Method of Dramatization* provides the means to more clearly understand the ‘multiple’ manifestation of the university.

Rather than standing in solely for a form of complex inter-relation that permits change, a multiplicity, as De Landa summarises, is a ‘distribution of singularities defining tendencies in a process’ (De Landa 2002, p. 19). That is, a multiplicity implies not simply multiple and complex facets in complex inter-relation, but singular points (remarkable features, if you will) which define certain tendencies over time - ‘multiplicities give form to processes, not to the final product’ (DeLanda 2002, p. 14). In this way, we could characterise the university as a process which exhibits tendencies, and what we recognise as the university as being our apprehension of these tendencies at a particular point in time, one which invokes in us the ‘collective sense’ of *university* that Barnett alludes to (Barnett, 2011, p. 63). This is perhaps a more radical re-interpretation of what a university ‘is’, and one which Deleuze’s *Method of Dramatisation* permits us to further examine through documenting these singular points (‘in the case’) in order to determine the conditions which structure such tendencies (‘universal singularities’). Barnett himself reaches for such a concept, one that encapsulates the idea of the conditions which structure the actual manifestation of the university, in his employment of the term ‘feasible utopias’ (Barnett, 2011, p. 4). That is to say, amongst the apparently ‘infinite’ possibilities of the university-as-multiplicity, only certain manifestations are in some way viable. This insight aids Barnett’s project of identifying four (and only four) such feasible utopias (‘liquid’; ‘therapeutic’; ‘authentic’; and ‘ecological’) and cautions us not to consider such constructions as ‘essential’ categories but rather as heuristic devices that might enable our thinking and

thereby guide our actions. Barnett himself acknowledges the link between his feasible utopias and the work of Deleuze (Barnett, 2001, p.156 n.9). The concepts of tendencies and virtualities that Deleuze puts forward in the *Method of Dramatization* and elsewhere therefore help provide a rich language through which Barnett and those taking up his work might seek to more clearly interrogate and comprehend the mechanism whereby the university *becomes* what it is at any given point in time.

The final point I would like to make regarding theory and method with respect to the present thesis concerns the way philosophers and other scholars consider the work of Gilles Deleuze. In maintaining a sustained engagement with Deleuze's work across the thesis, the present study demonstrates ways in which Deleuze's thought can be turned productively from what can be seen as an abstract, metaphysical focus in much of his own work to more concrete, almost methodological ends. The 'method of dramatisation' (vice-diction) is suggestive of such a methodological application of Deleuze, an approach to theorising but also, potentially, an empirical approach to investigation. The aforementioned workshop at the 2018 ALDinHE conference for fellow Learning Developers did just this – applying procedural elements of Actor Network Theory with some of the Soft Systems Methodology of Peter Checkland (1999), most notably his 'rich picture formation', to develop a method for undertaking a genealogical analysis based on practitioner experiences 'in the case'. This approach explicitly drew on the two stages of vice-diction, asking workshop participants to consider a 'remarkable point' (singularity) in their daily work – something that sticks in their minds – and to then describe the setting and scene for this moment, the *dramatis personae*, and how the various actors are seen to interact. This is drawn on paper using coloured pens. Participants were then asked to reflect on what actually occurred, and how this was shaped by the presence or absence of the various actors; the capacities involved in their relations; and what 'tendencies' they saw in the situation under analysis. These 'relational impressions' were then discussed in small groups, and common themes or threads identified, which were then discussed further as a whole. In this way, some of the 'universal singularities' of Learning Development practice could be traced, 'from the ground up'. Such an approach is not entirely novel, but what is perhaps fresh is the way such an exercise was undertaken on a distinctive ontological ground, with clearly set limitations on the generalisability of the findings, and clear 'guidance for thinking' around the nature of relationality, tendencies, and the inherent

virtuality of the manifold/event being described. The approach served to ‘breathe life’ into what can be seen as somewhat abstract Deleuzian terminology. Such approaches are open to further refinement and wider application. This example highlights the way in which Deleuze’s thinking, his approach to concept formation, and some of the ideas he has around the virtual, capacities, tendencies, and so on are not merely philosophical abstractions but living concepts in both the theoretical and empirical domains of educational research.

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